

BARNAVAUX

By PIERRE MILLE

Illustrated By HELEN MCKIE

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Barnavaux

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

TRANSLATED BY B. DRILLIEN

UNDER THE TRICOLOUR
LOUISE AND BARNAVAUX
TWO LITTLE PARISIANS

THE BODLEY HEAD



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THAT DAY WAS A VERITABLE SEDAN—DE. I BECAME ACTUALLY WEPT AND MALPIGHI
CHERISHED DREAMS OF MURDER. AS FOR ATCHOUM, BEING A TACITURN ENGLISHMAN,
HE DID NOTHING

BARNAVAUX

BY PIERRE MILLE

BEING THE AUTHORISED TRANSLATION
BY BÉRENGÈRE DRILLIEN
OF *SUR LA VASTE TERRE* WITH EIGHT
ILLUSTRATIONS BY HELEN MCKIE



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CONTENTS

	PAGE
RAMARY AND KETAKA	9
BARNAVAUX, GENERAL	83
RU Y BLAS	127
BARNAVAUX, STATESMAN	149
A USELESS PRECAUTION.	159
KIDI: A STORY OF THE CONGO	169
THE GOD	179
THE VENGEANCE OF MRS. MURRAY	191
THE CHINAMEN	211
THE BLIND MAN	251

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

<p>“ That day was a veritable Sedan—Delebecque actually wept, and Malpighi cherished dreams of murder. As for Atchoum, being a taciturn Englishman, he did nothing ”</p>	<p><i>Frontispiece</i></p>
<p>“ You are the Second Army Corps ” . . .</p>	<p style="text-align: right; margin-right: 10px;"><small>FACE PAGE</small></p> <p style="text-align: right;">108</p>
<p>“ The Senegalese have a way of sounding a bugle which makes you clench your teeth ”</p>	<p>124</p>
<p>“ I enlisted in the same way that men go into the Priesthood. I wanted to be elsewhere—I could not breathe at home ” . . .</p>	<p>134</p>
<p>“ The Tirailleur screwed up his eyes and shewed his teeth—Barnavaux rose disdainfully ” .</p>	<p>152</p>
<p>“ That day the Commander nearly went off his head ”</p>	<p>168</p>
<p>“ If you would only look down and see where you are going ”</p>	<p>260</p>
<p>“ You understand—I protest against this experiment ”</p>	<p>262</p>

Barnavaux

RAMARY AND KETAKA

THE house that Dr. Andrianivoune let to foreigners was at Soraka, a suburb of Tananarivo, just above Lake Anosy.

A French couple had lived and loved there ; two of the rooms, which were still hung with dainty pink chintz, bore witness to the taste and refinement of the late occupants, to the passage of some Western woman, whose eyes and hands had taken a delight in adorning her temporary home.

The wild and ragged moss-rose trees in the garden were gradually dying off, and the neglected coffee-trees bore no berries ; but the Japanese lilacs had grown as high as the young elms of our country ; and a thick plantation of peaches rustled in the breeze, tapping their branches against the old walls.

Above all this was the artificial lake made by order of the same King Radame who

had ordered the removal of the mountain of God, barren Ambohidzanahare, which offended his despot gaze. The sheet of calm water, almost circular in shape, shimmered gently in the buoyant air, merging further away into swamps and marshes up to the great plain of Ikopa where endless rice-fields gleamed and undulated in the sun. In the very centre of this bright and joyous ocean of scenery rose the chimneys of the Ourville-Florens brick-works, a symbol of conquest that looked stupidly unreal in such a spot.

My friend Galliac and I were living in the house belonging to the works. I remember one evening in particular, when the sun, setting on the western horizon, cast a glory over everything ; and the beauty of it made one's heart beat faster. The air we breathed was like sparkling wine, and houses, trees, men, and the great herds of cattle captured from the Fahavales, which the Senegalese soldiers, splendid rakish-looking fellows, were driving up the slopes, were all enveloped in a golden dust that seemed to sparkle with precious stones. In the background, Antananarivo, standing out in the yellow glow, looked like a Japanese painting spread upon a patterned screen.

Now and again the dim outline of a native, clothed in his white *lamba*, crossed the lower road, turning on his way to salute the conquering *vazaba*. Church bells marked the hours, and called the people to worship, and bugles sounded the long melancholy notes so often heard in far-off France; countless red-haired dogs, with straight, upstanding ears, barked savagely; the whole atmosphere was discordant yet strangely seductive.

Suddenly there was a sound of laughter, of peals of youthful laughter, stopping abruptly then beginning again, and Ketaka rushed out of the room I had given her for her own, crying triumphantly:

“I’ve caught one! I’ve caught one!”

Her slave, having netted a number of goldfish that occasionally swarmed in thousands to the surface of the lake, had placed them one at a time in a bowl, and my little Malagasy *amie* with commendable coolness had been engaged for the past hour in pretending to fish.

Her sister Ramary, Galliac’s “wife,” had been sitting at the other side of the bowl faithfully imitating her example. They were having a fishing match and my estab-

lishment had won ; Ketaka had caught the last of the goldfish.

They were standing before me now, their bare toes lightly pressing the floor of the veranda. Ramary seized her plait of coarse but smooth and shining black hair with both hands and threw it over her shoulder :

“ Ramilina,” she said, “ you do not look pleased that we play with the *bazandrano-mena*, the beasts that swim for food. Tell me, are you not pleased because they are French beasts ? ”

“ They are Chinese beasts, and you know nothing of geography, Ramary,” I answered.

“ I did learn geography with M. Peake at the school at Alarobia. M. Peake is a *vazaha* from America. But I also know the history of the *bazandrano*, and you, you do not know it. There was M. Laborde, the old man who is dead, the husband of Queen Ranavalona-the-Wicked, who also died a long time ago. They were married in the garden of M. Rigaud, down there near the lake. The Jesuit ‘ monpères ’ made them marry, they said it was better. M. Laborde went far away to the other end of the sacred water, to the river that has only one shore, and that leads to the countries of the white

men. Then he came again, and he brought back a thing of glass, and quite round with water in it and fishes that opened their mouths like this : ouf ! ouf ! and ate grains of rice. The queen loved them very much and had them put in the sacred lake. They were so clumsy and they looked so silly ! Well, Ramilina, they went down to all the rivers, and they ate all the other fishes except the eels, which are not fishes but snakes, and the crayfishes that were too hard for them."

The two sisters knew any number of stories and legends, and dearly loved to relate them. After having been educated by the Quakers, Ramary and Ketaka had only adopted the Catholic religion at the moment of the French conquest of Madagascar, with a docility that was full of irony, indifference, and a respect both wondering and disdainful for the customs of their conquerors. Of the *tenysoa*—the little religious and moral tracts peculiar to the Protestant schools—they remembered nothing but the hymns and chants, and a literal and rather exhaustive knowledge of the Bible. As for the mystery attached to religion, that did not trouble them at all, although they still

took a delight in the legends of the Old and New Testaments. For the rest, they much preferred a volume of Malagasy tales and traditions drawn up by the Norwegian, Dahle. They would read the book for hours at a time, and croon the songs, songs with short verses, the words of which were long and strange and like-sounding.

The story of Benandro made them cry bitterly ; Benandro, the beautiful youth who died far away, away from his father and mother in the lands of hunger and fever ; whose faithful slave, the handsome negro Tsaramainty, brought back his feet and hands that they might be solemnly buried and his spirit live with the spirits of his ancestors in the tomb of heavy uncut stones, where the dead, clothed in *lambas* woven of imperishable silk, sleep together on slabs of rock.

I had returned the volume of legends to its owner, but Ramary and Ketaka knew them all by heart, and even better, for they introduced new elements into the tales. For instance, Benandro had lived near them ; he had been taken away by *vazahas*, and officers with white helmets had shot him, " because he had done a mad thing." These

little girls had the imaginations of children, of children belonging to a race more nearly approaching the beginnings of humanity. In their language, the unspoiled language of a young people, the sun is called the "eye of day," and the moon the "silver thing." As Ramary and Ketaka spoke to me and I looked at their big, kindly, animal eyes, their imperious little gestures and the white robes that left their bodies free, I thought of Homer and Nausicaa.

However, I made a point of telling them, perhaps too seriously, that even if the goldfish were French beasts, that was not a reason to make them suffer, and that well-behaved people did not go fishing in a washing bowl; to punish them we would not give them new shoes for the procession of the Virgin.

Ramary made a face, unhooked the goldfish and threw it to a white cat, which, under pretext of taming, they had tied to the veranda railings. It had been there a fortnight and was now absolutely wild.

Ketaka sulked. She was a woman with a very good opinion of herself and she never contemplated the possibility of a reproach. As a matter of fact I was really in the wrong.

Our two little friends, being well-behaved girls, only left the house on rare occasions, and that by express permission. I saw my mistake ; but, too proud or too gauche to apologise, I sent my boy to the lake to catch new victims.

And so time went by, and we lived as gaily as children playing truant just as we had lived since the day when, hunting in the Antsahadinta swamps, mysterious fate had brought these women to us.

Our marriage had come about so charmingly. Nothing was further from our thoughts, but one day the queen—alas, how far away it all seems, there was a queen in those days!—asked us if we cared to shoot *arosy*. Now the *arosy* is a kind of wild goose, and wild goose is fine game, so we accepted with much enthusiasm. The next day, rifle on shoulder, and armed with a beautiful letter of recommendation for the officers of her domain, we paddled in canoes along the royal fish-preserves of Antsahadinta.

It was a very large lake of calm grey water, overgrown with dry rushes that crackled as the canoes went along. The middle where the water was deepest was

clear of rushes, but thousands of blue lotus-flowers had blossomed there, looking like tender eyes in the round leaves that surrounded them. Farther away, the hills were of the burning red colour peculiar to the high tablelands of Madagascar, a perpetual garish red of which one is always conscious, even when it is hidden by vegetation.

Above our heads the sky was filled with the angular flight of the marsh birds: big wild geese, ducks exactly like those of our own country, and *tsiriris* with their melancholy cry. At the first gunshot they had all risen, whirling round in such numbers and with so much fury that, in spite of the great height at which they were, the air quivered and resounded with the strokes of their powerful wings. The perpetual vibration and long dismal cries changed the aspect of the place, giving it life but removing none of its melancholy.

The Malagasy canoemen paddled gently along with lithe movements as though they were creeping over the calm waters. Their quick bright eyes noticed creatures I did not see, and they drew my attention to them without taking their hands from the short

oar cleaving its way through the deep water of the sleeping lake.

“Duck! *tsiriri!* wild goose! There, between those two clumps of rushes! Make your gun speak, monsieur le *vazaha!*”

In a kind of miniature pond a family of widgeon appeared, swimming along with anxious care, their little heads and coral-pink beaks turned to the right; and I fired twice among them with the fury and cruelty of the clumsy hunter who does not discriminate.

Three of the little creatures fell over limply and remained afloat, covering the smooth surface of the pond with the gold, white and bright metallic green of their feathers. Other birds surged from the forest of water plants; a wild goose dropped from a great height, splashing up the water all around, and, still alive, but with one eye gone and one wing broken, remained a moment upright upon the surface. Beautiful white feathers flew heavily away, looking, in the light of the setting sun like the sails of ships torn off by the wind. A great silver-grey eagle soared slowly heavenwards, standing out against the side of the barren hill now growing dark in the near approach of night.

“He’s hit !”

He was merely poised for flight, however, and soon hovered far above our heads in sublime stillness, waiting for the departure of man so that he might feed upon the dead and wounded birds that he knew lay hidden under the tangle of plants and grasses.

“Galliac,” I cried, “I’m going : it’s getting dark !”

And our two boats made their way to the shore.

A native saluted us with a magnificent yet servile bow, sweeping the ground with his straw hat. He had been waiting there, upright and motionless for twelve hours. It was Rainitavy, the governor of Antsahadinta, who had come to meet us with the gifts his position compelled him to offer, as we were *vazahas* of much importance whose arrival had been announced by the queen herself. Other natives carried in their arms or on their heads baskets filled with rice as white as ivory ; fowls, with their legs tied together and their heads hanging, squeaked and struggled ; a brown-wooled sheep was bleating plaintively and his horns, which with due regard to the importance of the

occasion had been gilded, glittered like luminous shells in the darkness.

These things were placed before us with much respect. Our bearers, who had just caught sight of a heap of fresh-cut sugar canes the green leaves of which were rustling gently, rushed forward and literally threw themselves upon the delicacy. That was their share of the good things; a natural sweetmeat, which, although a little intoxicating, keeps up a man's strength during long marches. Their greedy jaws set rapidly to work.

Out of the heap of canes came two little girls of fourteen and sixteen years with unabashed eyes, Rainitavy's youngest children.

"Ramatoa Mary! Ramatoa Ketaka!" said Galliac, who knew them.

He kissed them then and there, and they began to smile. Their bare feet rested lightly on the short prickly grass; they threw back their heads and, their *lambas* being open, one had a fleeting glance of their childish bosoms. They drew their robes together, however, without a touch of embarrassment, as a Western woman would adjust her cloak, much flattered at

having been called *ramatoa* which is an ultra-polite way of saying Madame or Miss ; usually only the syllable *ra* is used, joined on to the name. When people know each other very well they either drop or keep to this syllable according to the way it fits in with the name, or to the fancy of parents and friends.

“*Tsarava tompokolaby* ? Are you in good health, my lord ? ”

Each of them turned the palm of her hands outwards in the strange gesture insisted upon by their code of politeness. We started for the village and with easy, supple stride they went before us. Rainitavy, their father, preceded us with a lantern, and from time to time turned round with dignified courtesy to light our way.

Night fell. The bitter, cold air came in through the open door of our hut, where Ramary and Ketaka were amusing themselves by pulling out the feathers from the dead game that lay strewn on the floor.

“Ketaka,” I said gaily, “you are going to stay with me to-night, aren’t you ? ”

She shook her head.

"I'm not a bad girl! The girls at Tananarivo have many lovers. Razafinandriamanitra is a bad girl, so is Cécile Bazafy and Rasoa and Ramaly. It's not the same here!" Pausing a moment to think, she went on, "It's too small here. They would tell the Jesuit 'monpère' and he talks in a big box in the chapel. You must come to Mass to-morrow; he scolds us when we don't take the *vazahas* to Mass."

"How old are you?" said Galliac.

"I was born a year before the great war when the Hovas beat the Frenchmen."

She said this quite simply and without pride, as one would express an indisputable truth. She was alluding to the fruitless bombardment of Tamatave by our fleet in 1885.

"Ketaka," said Galliac, "I have the honour to inform you that General Duchesne has since taken Tananarivo."

She shook her head.

"It isn't General Duchesne who took Tananarivo, it is the *Kinoly*, the dead ogre who makes people dead. No one has ever seen him, because, as soon as anyone sees him, they are no longer alive unless they know of the magic herb that grows on the

old tombs that the wizards cut as they dance round.

“When the Frenchmen came to the west coast, he was heard laughing three nights, one after the other, in the sacred wood of Ambohimanga ; his jaws are like a crocodile’s and his laugh strikes against his jaws. Rafaralahy, my brother, who was lying near the tombs, hid his face that he might not see.

“The *Kinoly* came down and went to meet the Frenchmen. More than a hundred thousand had landed, white Frenchmen, black Frenchmen who come from Africa, and very ugly yellow Frenchmen, who are *Arabous* and have no women. And they all came climbing up, with great guns on wheels, mules, and things that could go up in the air like birds, and great jars of wine. They threw bridges over the rivers and cut into the mountains to let their iron carriages pass ; and every night they laughed when they went to bed in their houses of canvas.

“The *Kinoly* arrived in the great Sakalave plain, and he saw grass and grass, but no rice and no sugar-canes and no manioc. The humped cattle fled at the approach of the Ghost-who-never-rests, and the ghost

came to the first of the *miaramila*, the soldiers. They could not see his crocodile face, it was hidden in a great *lamba*. But his eyes were as red as blood-red coal. He walked softly past the soldiers and hung down his head like a beggar.

“Then the French *miaramila* said to him, ‘Beggarmen, your nails are very long! The *Kinoly* drew out his claws and said, ‘They have grown under the ground.’ Then he opened his *lamba* and the French *miaramila* said, ‘How hollow is your belly!’ ‘Because it has been rotting under the ground!’ Then the *miaramila* said once more, ‘Your eyes are very red!’ And the *Kinoly* took his shroud in his two hands, threw it away and said, ‘Behold!’

“He had not any eyes but two holes filled with fire, and dead flesh on the bones of his face.

“The soldiers became very pale; they were attacked by fever and died.

“The *Kinoly* went on farther. He looked at the *Arabous*; he looked at the men who came from the other side of Africa and at the officers dressed in white. He walked amongst them, waked them up at night, stopped them in their meals and placed his

hand on the back of their mules. And when they saw the dead ghoul that makes people die, they became pale and died also. They perished in the deserts, in the red earth, in the rivers; and the *Kinoly* rejoiced at the bad smell and played with the flies. This lasted two moons and afterwards all were dead.

“Then the *Kinoly* went up to Tananarivo because he wanted to see Raini-laiarivony, the Queen’s husband and chief minister. The old man was sleeping on a beautiful brass bed in one of the rooms of his palace in the midst of all his great riches. He had drunken wine at his evening meal; the ‘symbols-of-the-day’s-duration,’ the clocks of gold and silver, were ticking against the walls covered with beautiful paper on which were painted battles, gardens, people in boats embracing or playing music; there were painted china vases on the shelves and everything came from Europe.

“The moon shone through the window and one could see that the sleeper was full of years, for as he slept his fingers trembled a little on the white sheet. The Ghost-who-never-rests struck him on the shoulder and said, ‘Raini-laiarivony, son of Rainiary,

I have come to seek you. I have caused all the Frenchmen to die. Now it is your turn ; you are old, follow me !’

“ But he who was all-powerful then in Madagascar woke without fear, and looked at the *Kinoly* without dying, for he had the magic herb. ‘ I will not follow you, O evil one ! The breath of life is sweet and I still love my power, my palaces, my herds of cattle and the daily welcome of my slaves. I am greater than you ; leave me !’

“ The *Kinoly* answered nothing. He went back into the Sakalave plain, where the dead Frenchmen were sleeping among the bushes, in the sand, and in the rivers. Others were hanging on the trees ; full of fear at the loneliness they had destroyed themselves. The mule-drivers had fallen dead with their animals at the very moment when they were leaning over the water to drink, and the flesh was falling away from their bones.

“ The Ghost touched them with his finger and said, ‘ Rise !’ And they all rose. The mules whinnied and pawed the grass as they do when the bugle sounds. The men took their guns and the officers drew their swords. They cut for themselves staves

of wood, crossed the Ambohimenas and ran towards Tananarivo. Then the chief minister said, 'The Ghost lied. How are these devils returning!'

"The queen made a great *kabary*, and the Malagasy *miaramila* went to meet the Frenchmen. And they were brave! Had they been afraid of the Betsimisaraka or the Bares? Are they afraid of the Faha-vales now? I saw a soldier shot the other day, and his lips were less pale than yours now, oh, Ramilina, on the day they led him to the stake. But when they arrived before the French, Ramasombazana who commanded them became grey with terror and his teeth chattered. They were not men, these Frenchmen, they were all *Kinoly*! They had not any eyes but holes filled with flames, and dead flesh upon their bones. Daylight could be seen through their hollow bellies, claws grew out of their hands and their jaws opened like the jaws of a corpse. They walked quick, quick; their feet did not make any noise, their guns did not make any smoke and killed like thunderbolts.

"Ramasombazana flung away his plumed hat, flung away his sword and fled. The

soldiers flung away their arms and fled. And the Phantom-Frenchmen came nearer and nearer; they climbed up the mountains, they descended into the valleys. The walls crumbled away when they touched them; and then, their fiery eyes, their dead faces! The old man, the chief minister, who had married three queens, began to cry because the *Kinoly* had conquered.

“And it was the *Kinoly* who gave back Tananarivo to the Phantom-Frenchmen.”

Ketaka finished her story. She had told it squatting on her heels, volubly but without a gesture, in an old language that I could hardly understand but which Galliac interpreted from time to time.

Her sister Ramary cried:

“Ketaka is a great story-teller. She makes up stories every day. It is true there are *Kinoly* and I know where they live, near the great stones. But those are not the ones that took Tananarivo. They are alive, the conquerors of the town. Sary-Bakoly, my other sister, has married one, Lieutenant Biret, who is at Moramanga near the great forest.”

“You have a sister called Sary-Bakoly, the Porcelain Statue? What a very pretty

name," said Galliac, "she must be pretty too!"

"Not more than me," said Ketaka.

She slipped her slender arms from under her *lamba*, bent her head and stood before us thin and fragile; her skin, like that of most girls of noble lineage in this country, was almost white. Her cheeks were even a little pink, and, with her huge black eyes and magnificent teeth that she rubbed every day with charcoal and ashes, she knew herself to be desirable in her own land. A child, a woman, an animal—she suggested all these, and without intending it. I smiled sleepily as I looked at her.

The stars had blossomed abundantly in the sky, the Milky Way standing out against the dark deep blue with so dazzling and clear a whiteness that it looked like a stationary cloud. In one place it divided into two, and one of the branches seemed gradually to evaporate and lose itself in the boundless stretch of darkness. The leaves of great trees quivered and rustled gently. In the midst of dreary Imerina, the wooded heights above Antsahadinta are wonderful and beautiful to look upon. That is one reason why the natives regarded

them as sacred, like the eleven other hills crowned with woods whither the first Hova kings journeyed to listen to the rustling of invisible wings under the branches ; to the passing of the Vazimba spirits, the spirits of the first possessors who had been conquered and massacred by the Hovas, and who, by some mysterious compensation, had become the guardian spirits of their murderers.

Through the interlacing branches great fires, like eager eyes, shone in the distance. At regular intervals the silence was broken by the voices of the Malagasy sentinels who kept the fires going, the number and position of which showed that all was quiet and peaceful. The neighbouring villages also had their sentinels, keeping guard over the piles of blazing brushwood, and all through the night we heard their regular, monotonous cry.

Our two little new-found friends watched us as we put up our camp bedsteads and unrolled our blankets, and then crept silently away. Galliac made sure that the wooden bar holding the door was safe, and we fell asleep. Our bearers had lain down under a shed in the open air. They were all lying

as close together as they could get, for at this time of the year the nights on such elevated plains are as cool as our autumn nights at home. We had come to this place in spite of the insurrection, and in spite of the incessant attacks of the Fahavales, who had even gone so far as to sack the suburbs of Tananarivo. "There's never been any fuss at Antsahadinta," Galliac had told me, "and Rainitavy is an old friend of mine."

Towards midnight, however, I thought I could hear distant firing, and Rainitavy wakened us. Three leagues away the Fahavales had just attacked and burned down Ambatomasina, the inhabitants of which had fled to us. Still trembling, some of them rushed into our hut. The enemy, about three hundred in number, and armed with assegais and two rifles, had fallen upon the village, but the poor villagers had nothing with which to defend themselves, for the French Government had ordered all their arms to be taken from them.

"Would you, O *vazaha*, have us fight with our fists?" they said, lifting up their yellow hands covered with cold perspiration.

The governor of Ambatomasina, an

old, white-haired man, was weeping for his house, to which the enemy had set fire—his beautiful house with its gilded cane chairs, its glass windows and its wall-paper on which were pictures of Frenchmen killing Arabs amidst the greenest of scenery. He had built his house with the fruits of patient extortion from his people, but in spite of this, he had stood to them—far more than we the conquerors—as the representative of justice and protection.

There was no pillaging in the time of this “thief,” and the Malagasies were so used to the abuses of their government that they did not see the incongruity of the thing. At this moment, ruined and united one and all by a common disaster, they looked hopefully and anxiously at the white men who had conquered but not protected them ; and of course we could do nothing.

We ourselves were afraid of being attacked in this lonely village, of being given over to the enemy by our friend Rainitavy. We might be held as ransom for the village, which would probably be burned like the other if any resistance were offered. Rainitavy, however, did not reason thus. He was divided between the respect he still felt for

us and his fear of the Fahavales. Ketaka and her sister wept bitterly, and so the night wore on.

We had two rifles, which, as a precaution, we had brought with us. Our guns and two revolvers we gave to those of our bearers whom we most trusted; then all that remained was to mount guard.

Away to the east Ambatomasina was blazing fiercely and casting a red glow over part of the horizon. The light reassured us, for we knew that the men at the nearest French station would be certain to notice it and arrive post-haste, and in this hope we kept our gaze fixed upon the dark slope of the hill before us. We were filled with strange feelings, not of fear itself, but with the fear of being afraid, with the anguish of the unknown, unseen danger, and with the semi-nervous, semi-superstitious trepidation that fills a man when encompassed by darkness, which makes him doubt his own courage.

Dawn came. We began to joke and to speak of a march on Ambatomasina. At eight o'clock a platoon of Algerian tirailleurs arrived at the double, and we felt ridiculous and ashamed enough to accept with con-

trition the blame for our foolhardiness, which the captain expressed with no little vigour.

Everything, however, has its good and bad sides ; I reminded myself that our feeble presence had saved the village of our friend Rainitavy from the fate of its neighbour. The father of Ramary and Ketaka remained silent and sorrowful : the danger escaped to-day must certainly be reckoned with to-morrow or in a very few days. He looked with dismal resignation at the departure of the Frenchmen who had been his guests, and who were now abandoning him, undefended as he was, to an enemy who, after all, was not his but theirs.

Perhaps, too, he was thinking of his secret stores of money, of his compromises with the rebels, of suspicious, yet necessary negotiations of ancient date which reassured him, though at the same time they imposed certain mysterious duties upon him.

“Ramilina, Ragalliac,” he said, “I must stay here because I am the Governor. The breath of life is sweet, but none may flee his destiny. I am afraid for my two daughters. The hills of Antsahadinta are no sure refuge for them, and I beg you to take them

to their uncle Rainimaro, at Tananarivo, in the Ambatovinaky quarter."

Then, *ma foi*, I cried :

"Ketaka, little Ketaka, if I take you away at all, I intend to keep you !"

At that moment Ketaka, with set mouth, was watching a slave engaged in tying her sleeping-mat on to a wooden chest which contained all her worldly possessions. Without the least embarrassment she replied :

"It is well, if you have not already a wife."

Thus it was I became betrothed after a day's hunting in the swamps followed by the recitation of a lugubrious legend, a night on guard and much anxiety now changed into a kind of over-excited delight. Her father bowed with a simple, courteous smile. He suffered no delusions on the subject of marriages such as this, between a white man and a native girl; they were but fleeting at the best of times. However, he was glad to find a protector for his child, and perhaps for himself also.

It must be remembered, too, that the idea of abstinence and virtue is not shared by the Malagasies. They have no such ideas on the subject of chastity and are not

prejudiced in favour of it ; a woman is as free to love as a man, this being a very ancient tradition bequeathed to their race by the Malayo-Polynesians, who peopled Madagascar in former days. And in Madagascar, just as in the Malay islands, children born of irregular unions are received with open arms and cherished accordingly by the family of the mother.

As the country through which we had travelled to reach Antsahadinta was not considered safe, we followed the soldiers who were returning at the ordinary marching pace ; and, once we reached the high road, our little company joined itself to the escort accompanying the convoy that passed daily in charge of merchandise for Tananarivo.

After Alarobia, the villages through which the caravan passed had all been burned. As we climbed the innumerable hills of red soil, we could see from far away their melancholy outline, the gable ends of the red brick houses bereft of the sheltering roof which had fallen in. Sometimes the wind wafted the odour of the recent fire, a bitter smell of smouldering straw and burnt bricks, from whence the damp came steaming. Inside the desolate houses, the burning

thatch had fallen and lay scattered, and above the ruins could be seen the ashes still burning on the ancient hearth-place, piled up higher in the sacred north-east corner ; on all hands were water-jars, dishes for cooking rice and countless clumsy cups and platters made of red clay which the fire had blackened or consumed. These utensils seemed all the more mournful because in a vague way they looked as though they might have come from Europe. The window frames still contained fragments of broken glass, the stone stairs were still ranged against the walls ; turkeys had come back to their old home and were searching for food among the refuse. Indeed, some of the more isolated dwelling-places put me in mind of a Beauce farmhouse.

The fields of native manioc and of potatoes, the seed of which had come from France, lighted up by the pretty, bright dappled green of the rice-fields, spread before us in regular squares reaching down to the lower valleys. A clever system of drainage carried the water to the hill-sides ; the whole country bore witness to the hard work of the people who tended it, to their passionate attachment to the bit of land

that belonged to them, to their love of the plants that formed their chief food, or which they were able to sell, plants that they had seen grow and expand under the combined action of sun, water, the spade and a kind of club made of the thigh-bone of an ox, with which they broke up the hard lumps of soil.

How pitiful it was to see such patient labour pillaged, ravaged, scattered ! Now and then we caught sight of blurred white figures, running hither and thither on some high and distant hill and the flash of a gunshot. It was the Fahavales watching the high road, watching the caravans. Then the bearers, uttering cries of distress, came to huddle against the men of the escort, Senegalese fellows with blue-black skins, one and all accompanied by their wives, who, with pendant bosoms and broad curved hips, marched beside them, covered with silver and copper bangles, amulets and amber necklaces.

Barbarians such as these had been called upon by civilised man to overcome a people much less primitive than they, but who had been conquered by them. These Senegalese had the greatest contempt for the

Malagasies, and now marched before us and them without the slightest regard for order and with the leaps and bounds of wild animals. They hardly deigned to wear a uniform, but one could not but admire their dauntless and almost terrible courage, their rude health and their passion for bloody warfare, for death received, and, more especially, for death given at close quarters.

The poor, timid, Malagasy bearers, huddling fearfully together, were relating their misfortunes and their despair; they told how those of their comrades who had passed earlier along the road had been taken prisoner by the enemy and had had their hamstrings severed.

They all began to chatter light-heartedly again as soon as the Fahavales disappeared from the horizon, and once more the caravan stretched out to its full length, spreading, narrow and winding, over hundreds of yards, something like a badly linked chain. The bearers went along in twos or fours carrying the heavy chests, the cases filled with bread and wine, the camp bedsteads and other baggage and provisions such as would be taken by Europeans into a country that

their fancy had pictured as much more savage, and destitute of all necessities.

“We’re nearly there,” said Galliac, “there’s the Jesuit observatory!”

On the summit of a circular hill rose a half-ruined, dome-shaped tower, which although crumbling to pieces still contrived to look *banal* and vulgar.

“Doesn’t it make you think of the Gospels?” said Galliac, adding with a cynical smile, “I came not to bring peace upon the earth, but the sword!”

Here the bearers all gave vent to a howl of delight, the ancient, I might almost say sacred cry which they always utter as they approach the end of a long journey. There before them was the City, a miracle of civilisation in the very midst of their savage land. They had been running, panting and sweating for many hours, clothed, or rather unclothed in a kind of hempen sack; they had slipped on the wet clay, and shivered in the gloomy shade of the great trees. Now they were nearly there!

“Antananarivo! Antananarivo!”

Before us lay the huge miracle, mounting guard over three hills, built by people who had no more comprehended what they were

doing than the Jews when, under the guidance of their haughty priests, they set up a pyramid in Egypt. There lay the city before us, strange and imposing. Antananarivo!

The steep crests of the hills were covered with a mass of houses composed of several storeys, and with verandas, white and grey churches with pealing bells, two enormous palaces, one of them belonging to the Queen and the other to the Prime Minister, the former building surmounted by a flattened dome, the latter surmounted by four massive towers with Roman archways. The whole of the country round resolved itself into one long street, and the houses cumbered and obscured the earth.

Some of them had the *recherché* elegance of a villa, and with bow-windows and tennis-courts affected the cosy comfort of English cottages, and everywhere walls built of large, unburnt bricks protected the plantations of peach-trees and mango-trees, a curious blend of vegetation. This blend of two extremes was apparent, moreover, in everything, in the warm but bracing air, in the houses, in the dress of the native men, who all wore ready-made trousers under the classical folds of their *lambas*.

Our *flanzanes*—chairs carried by four men who changed places with four others every minute or so, without pausing in their rapid trot—flew along the tracks made by the Engineers, and we reached the first houses of the town. There the tracks completely disappeared, the bearers had to climb rocks, mount walls and cross courtyards. They swarmed up places as sloping as the roof of a house. One hundred men could well have defended this fortress that had surrendered without striking a single blow, and it seemed to us absolutely incomprehensible that, having failed to defend themselves at the favourable moment in 1895, they should now be waging hopeless warfare against us.

We reached the Place d'Andohalo and the Rue du Zoma, climbed walls, crossed ditches and private gardens, into which we entered as though they belonged to us, and at last reached our destination.

It was night and Galliac and I had supper together. Galliac, by the way, had calmly betrothed himself to Ramary.

“What about the women?” I asked the boy who was waiting on us.

“Their slave has cooked rice for them, Ramilina, and they have eaten.”

I went to my room. Ketaka was there sitting at the table making tambour lace. She had lighted my lamp, put my books away, placed her trunk in a corner and drawn the curtains to. I felt as though she had been there for centuries waiting for me, or rather that she had always lived with me.

Her hair was in two thick plaits hanging over her shoulders ; she had the serious, self-confident look of a married woman and the body of a child with budding breasts under her simple robe.

“Ketaka,” I said.

“Yes, my lord.”

And she held out her lips as calmly as though we had been married for years, undressed and fetched her beautiful new sleeping-mat, which she placed at the foot of my bed.

And thus she became my wife, although I could not truthfully say that she ever shared my couch.

But the life of the house was little Ramary, Galliac's *amie*. The voluntary semi-captivity in which she lived pleased her, for

she was still but a timid child and fearful of the world ; she had accepted her lot with joy. And yet she was such a woman, so humbly and deliciously feminine. When I went into Galliac's room in the morning, I always found her lying close beside him, for she made a point of coming to him at dawn ; the rest of the night she spent like Ketaka on her sleeping-mat.

She would look at me with the bright eyes of a little brown mouse, timid yet happy, and kept her arms tight round his neck. Galliac let her do as she liked. His rather hard heart had opened out and grown tender ; he had given himself up to the charm of this strange union, full of joy at being the master, owner and lord of this creature, half-woman, half-animal, who loved, caressed and spoke.

“ If ever you find any girl in France worth Ramary, I'll marry her,” he said to me one day.

Thus he had succumbed by degrees to the levelling power of love that encourages the inter-marriage of alien races, and in so doing creates others whose fate is as yet in the balance.

Then, there was the seduction, the

irresistible allurements of a love that was not like that of our countries; that was slower, more indeterminate, more savage, and of an unknown rhythm, like the dances over there.

As far as Galliac and I were concerned our evening chats, our similarity of interests and the conformity of our ideas and education were sufficient to keep us from rusting. The comparative solitude in which we lived had made our tastes very simple. We were very fond of one another and we loved these two little girls frankly, yet without speaking of it, probably because we felt a kind of reluctance to confess to the rapid changes we had undergone in this new life in a new country.

What had taken us there? To seek gold, till the ground, or make fortunes? We did not know, and at times shame would fill us at the thought that we were beginning to forget our country and that we no longer cared for the things that had filled our lives in France.

Galliac in particular threw himself into his new life with sombre vehemence, with concentrated ardour. He had left no one on the other side of the water, neither friends

nor relations, and one day Ramary almost wept as he told her so.

“You have no father, no mother, no brother nor sisters? *O mahantra, mahantra ianabo!* Unhappy one!”

“Not at all,” I said, trying to touch upon her native avarice, “on the contrary, he is rich, he has plenty of money, Ramary!”

She could not conceive of a man without a family belonging to him; without the father or maternal uncle, without being in some way related to other human beings as powerful and experienced as himself, who helped, advised, and cared for him in sickness and defended him against the other families who attack and persecute the man who is alone and undefended.

In the little Protestant tracts and in those of the Jesuit missionaries, there is always one phrase that recurs like the refrain in a song: “Pity the poor and the orphan.” To be poor or an orphan is almost the same thing to primitive ideas; and it is one of the tasks of civilisation and the Christian religion to overcome the idea that the isolated individual shall be treated like a wild beast.

Then, perhaps, for the first time there

came into Ramary's childish mind the delicious idea that she must also pity the man she loved.

In spite of her great love and in spite of her youth—she was but fourteen—Galliac had not been the first man to possess her, and she confessed as much without the least vestige of shame. Among these people virginity is looked upon by the women as containing the possibility of future suffering and a thing to be disposed of at the very earliest possible opportunity when the child is so young as to be almost unconscious of pain.

When Ramary was quite a tiny child she had played with other children who were not innocent either, under the sacred trees of Antsahadinta, near the tombs of the nobles, each crowned with the little wooden hut where their spirit comes to seek rest.

Then later she had followed, through the green valleys of Vonizongo, the son of an English pastor who had left her one day, taking with him a belt filled with gold dust. He had intended to return, but while crossing a river his boat had upset and the heavy belt had dragged him under.

Each year on the day he died, Ramary

let down her hair and covered herself in dark blue veils, because, had she neglected such rites the *matotoa*, or ghost, might have taken offence. But she no longer felt unhappy when she thought about him, and never tried to hide any of the adventures she had had before meeting with Galliac, because, according to her peculiar moral code, there was nothing to be ashamed of. She knew she must not ally herself to any but men of the highest caste, or to *vazahas* who were above all castes.

In her opinion, a married woman should never go out of her husband's house. There were plenty of girls at Tananarivo, girls of high birth, some of the queen's ladies-in-waiting even, who did not hesitate to go into the town on visits that were more or less honourable. Ramary, who held to the austere manners and customs of the country, did not attempt to disguise her contempt for such women.

My little friend Ketaka was of the same opinion on this subject, she even exaggerated it ; for Ramary, who was in love, was more indulgent. She also had a great friend, an aristocratic young woman of noble birth with a bad reputation, whom she had taken

under her protection, a fact of which Ramary was not a little proud. Her name was Princess Zanak-Antitra.

The princess's mad passion for a man had caused a scandal even in the half-barbarous court of Ranavalona, which was anything but hypocritical, and where morals did not count for much. Powerful State reasons were the cause that kept her from Captain Limal. The palace at that time was full of intrigue, of suspicious emissaries coming from no one knew where and starting off again for unknown destinations after secret visits to very exalted personages. And Princess Zanak-Antitra told Captain Limal everything; for him she would have given up her husband, she would have given up the queen and her children. She had lost all feeling of patriotism—if such a thing has ever existed in Madagascar—all feeling of religion and all regard for family interests, that sacred bond that forms the base of true Malagasy morality.

The consequence was that the queen's chaplain, the queen herself, and the princess's husband, who up to then had been quite pleasant as all well-brought-up husbands should be, interfered with much emphasis.

The princess was forbidden to see her great friend, but she saw him nevertheless.

So they decided to shut her up, and kept her in her rooms until she screamed with rage, saying that she was of sufficiently noble birth to choose her lovers where she liked. They sent some of the Protestant clergy to reason with her, and she retaliated by demanding a divorce. Her love was so great and true that it was almost childish ; she wept during public ceremonies, she wept in the temple, and at balls and reviews, holding to her eyes the handkerchief that Captain Limal furtively handed her.

She did not, however, dare to see him again at his house, so she gave him rendez-vous at ours ; she always arrived in a great hurry, carried by her eight bearers, clothed all in white silk and covered with hideous and heavy jewellery of gold and pearl. And she would chatter for hours with Ramary ; they would exchange happy confidences until the arrival of Captain Limal.

The whole town lived in the most lazy and delightful indifference, in the very centre of the war that was playing havoc all around. The harvest season had come, and the

great rice-fields were yellow ; young girls bent low over the soft clay, cut the plants close to the root with clumsy scythes. Towards evening they went home, holding in their hands purple lotus flowers gathered in the marshes among the close-growing rice-plants. We could see them going up the hill-sides, their delicate brown faces showing the traces of a healthful fatigue, the blue flowers shining like a star among the folds of their veils, their hair loose upon their shoulders and the setting sun behind them. Little naked children followed them, covered from head to foot with mud and laughing with the sheer joy of life. The whole lot of them, mistresses and slaves, had been harvesting together, and returned at night to sit around the cauldrons of smoking rice and eat together. There was a curious equality between masters and slaves, and the simple fact of their life in common mitigated the hardships of serfdom. Sometimes, however, there was the sound of a mother weeping, like Rachel, because her child was going to be taken from her and sold far away into captivity.

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About this time Ketaka's female slave

gave birth to a little girl. The tiny creature, which hardly seemed a living thing, had a solemn black face and did not cry in the way that Western babies do. Her mother carried her on her back, swathed in the folds of her *lamba*, or put her stark naked on the sunny lawn. It made Ketaka very happy ; for her it was an increase of fortune and dignity ; besides, according to the customs of the country, she was, morally speaking the second mother of the tiny being, and the new responsibility filled her with pride and love. So our household numbered one more. We also had a monkey, a dog, a mule, a great many fowls and turkeys and two little black pigs.

So our life flowed on in happy idleness. Ramary had chosen the better part ; Ketaka busied herself with many things and looked after the house. I believed that I loved her because she belonged to me ; it did not occur to me that there were other more intimate reasons for my love, and that in humouring me, in removing all petty cares from my path, she had taken a far greater hold upon me than I had on her.

The great summer rains had ceased, the red dust of the parched roads whirled up

in huge billows to the cloudless sky, and sometimes I could not help connecting the dry, still beauty of the country with the immovable and reserved courtesy of its inhabitants.

Ketaka was a true daughter of the race. She had its pride, its avarice, its litigious, formal and tyrannical spirit. There were other elements in her composition, too, I knew: a cowardice that grovelled to brute force, and a deferential contempt for the white man to whom she was subject. But under all these feelings, even under certain rigid and unbreakable principles, which although contrary to ours had been bequeathed to her out of the ages, something else lay hidden: a fierce determination never to beg for mercy, and a resolve to remain free, to live according to the ideas which really meant something to her.

I had bought one day at a public sale about a hundred yards of red cretonne, with a pattern of big, pale-coloured roses. Ketaka immediately fetched a hammer, rigged up a kind of ladder and began to hang our room, fixing the material on bamboo rods with quick, untiring activity, full of secret pride at doing something useful, of acting house-

wife, of being able to make a dainty, happy home.

“You are hard at work, little Ketaka,” said Galliac laughingly, “but you will never sleep in the beautiful room. Do you not know that Ramilina is tired of you because you are never gay?”

It was only a joke, but Ketaka did not understand jokes. When I came in for the morning meal, she greeted me coldly, speaking in the old, outlandish speech of the country which I always had a certain amount of difficulty in understanding, and which, once again, I failed to comprehend.

I answered “yes,” however, in spite of that, according to the immemorial custom of deaf people, and of those who, for some reason or another, do not hear what is said. She went on speaking, and again I said “yes” at random, and without attempting to understand her. That evening she disappeared. And her flight was so unexpected, being the first time she had ever left the house, that I quite thought it was a joke and waited her return with the greatest complacency. But Ramary thought differently and said to me :

“My sister will not come back. She

asked you if it was true that you wearied of her and you replied 'Yes.' She asked you if she should tell the carpenter to complete your beautiful room and you replied 'Yes.' She has done according to your desire."

I felt desperately alone. I was like a child who has lost his plaything! She had gone to her uncle Rainimaro. Should I send for her? No, there was my own pride to be thought of. I a white man! She had gone without a word of reproach, without tears or blame. I was furious that she had been able to make up her mind thus quickly, and that she should have resigned herself with so much disdain to her fate. It was Princess Zanak-Antitra who finally set to work and brought us together again, and Ketaka came back to me the same as before, proud with the pride of a goddess or an idol.

And so it went on. The joys and pleasures of every day that had lost their old intensity of delight because it is inevitable that human beings must tire, the little anxieties, little mortifications, and troubles that I look back upon as joys. Then Galliac, my friend, my almost brother, went away.

He was tired of living in the town, and

felt he could no longer breathe there. In spite of incendiarism, sinister prophecies and the departure of other Europeans who never returned, he went away. He had tasted the delights of life in the open and could not do without them. It wasn't even worth calling a journey either; he was only going south for a fortnight about sixty miles away from Tananarivo! The bare idea of danger made him shrug his shoulders. The next morning he was off, surrounded by his baggage and his bearers, treating the whole thing as a joke, probably because he did not wish to show how much he felt going. He had told Ramary he was going hunting.

“Good-bye, old chap!”

“Good-bye, old chap!”

Both of us were heavy-hearted, and I, the one left behind, depressed beyond words, but we neither of us spoke of our feelings. And yet we were as brothers to one another. How could we speak of what we felt, men both of us, getting on in life, with skins hardened and tanned by the tropical sun, and lips that would have trembled in a sob had either attempted to speak of the sadness of farewell. No, better not!

“ Good-bye, you’ll write ? ”

“ Don’t expect so, shan’t be able to.”

“ Oh, very well, good-bye.”

“ Good-bye ! ”

The little procession set off, wound round the lake and disappeared behind barren Ambohi-dzanahare, beyond the sacred spot where year by year the queen was wont to assemble her people.

Now they had quite disappeared and even from my balcony I could not catch a glimpse of them. I heard a great sob behind me and turning, saw Ramary weeping, weeping bitterly, with her face hidden in her hands. She was quite inconsolable.

“ He told me he was going to shoot birds, but it is not true. He has gone to fight, and I shall never see him again, never, never ! ”

“ Ramilina, here is my sister Sary-Bakoly who has come to visit you,” said Ketaka.

The Porcelain Statue stood before me, accompanied by a slave carrying a basket of bananas and oranges, a chicken and some eggs, for a visit of ceremony is never accomplished without the offering of some gift.

Sary-Bakoly had returned from Mouramangue with her *ami*, Lieutenant Biret.

She was delighted to find her sisters living with such illustrious *vazabas* and begged permission to see them very often. I unhesitatingly gave her full and free permission.

Sary-Bakoly was tall and fairly old; her face was thin and intelligent, inscrutable and polite, but obstinate and wilful in a way that reminded me of Ketaka. The two immediately began a long and interminable conversation about parents and relations, beasts and men, rice and manioc fields, ending up by trying the weight of the little nigger baby, the future slave whom her slave mother had bestowed upon Ketaka.

Then it was I understood how greatly family interests monopolised their hearts and minds, and how little they were affected by my fugitive passage among them. I read in their consent to take us as husbands and masters as much condescension as fear and weakness. I guessed at grievances of which they had never spoken, and at a well-deserved contempt for our ignorance of certain rites and duties. I knew they had judged us according to morals and principles that were not ours.

Sary-Bakoly came often to see us; then one day she told us she was going, with the

lieutenant's consent, to spend a fortnight with her family.

"Do you understand, Ramilina?" said Ketaka.

And I answered as before that I understood perfectly. My *quasi* sister-in-law thanked me profusely, and with strange gratitude, as though I had just promised something of much importance.

Ramary was not present at such conversations. They considered her too young, and besides her great love for Galliac made her a kind of traitor, as it were, and put her outside the pale of her family and its interests. Thus the way was paved for the great catastrophe, at the same time that another, and far more tragic and irreparable tragedy, was on its way to meet us.

I had greeted Sary-Bakoly with special and rather ironical attention, because her union with Lieutenant Biret seemed to me to present many interesting characteristics. It was very different from mine and from Galliac's. Sary-Bakoly held the purse strings in that establishment. Every month—a lieutenant in Madagascar does not receive much pay, and when he is in love

he must make up his mind to sacrifice something—Lieutenant Biret gave his wife the whole of his pay. Sary-Bakoly kept the accounts, gave him his pocket-money and paid his tailor.

Such a state of things seemed to me to suggest the revenge of one native upon the whole of our colonial system of government. And to be quite clear, what is the principle of our system ? First of all to make the native pay, and then to govern with his money ; after deducting the pay of our officials from the lump sum, we next put the balance in our pockets. Here we had a white man paying, and his native mistress governing, and pocketing all the profits. This reversing of rôles gave me at times much wholesome food for reflection.

But after all it is foolish to apply the general principles governing politics to the management of a home. The departure of Sary-Bakoly for Mouramangue, the careless, easy way I said good-bye to her, and also—it is a humiliating thing to have to confess but still it must be done—the indelicacy with which Lieutenant Biret took advantage of a Malagasy custom of which I was ignorant gave rise to much serious trouble.

It was Joseph, my boy, who took upon himself the task of enlightening me. One evening, when waiting at table, he intimated that he had something on his mind.

The women ate alone, their food consisting of rice cooked in water, seasoned with sugar and red pepper, dried fish, or on feast days, a little meat. It would not have been fitting for them to sit at table with us, and, besides, such an honour would have much embarrassed them, for a very simple reason: they did not know how to use a fork.

The Malagasies have only learned the use of the spoon. I have dined with the queen and all her family, with the daughters of ministers, and the wives of the great ones at Court—what wives and what great ones!—and I don't believe there were half a dozen among them who knew the use of any table article but a spoon. And the attitude of the queen and her ladies was truly heroic: they smilingly graced the repast with their presence, but they ate nothing. True, they made up for this abstinence when it came to the champagne.

And we had to remember that our two little wives were country girls, peasants in spite of their noble birth. They sat on

chairs instead of on the ground only to accomplish actions taught them by their Catholic or Protestant masters, such as reading, writing and sewing. But as they had not been taught to eat like white folk they squatted on a mat in front of a smoking cauldron, and were little savages still.

Thus it was that after Galliac's departure I took my meals in solitary state, waited upon by Joseph. I had got into the habit of allowing him to talk, to make the time pass more quickly. I thoroughly appreciated him for his politeness, his gentleness, and his hypocrisy, all of which combined, made of him an excellent servant. Another thing about him was that he was delightfully lazy, lazy enough to prefer extraordinary or ignominious tasks to strenuous ones.

At the present moment he was busily and solemnly engaged in taking out, with a bit of straw, the ants swimming in my coffee. Ants were the plague of the house ; they were all over the place, and most especially in the sugar-basin. It was quite useless to hide the latter in the highest and most impregnable places, to surround it with an ocean of vinegar, or devise patent ways of keeping it closed, there would always

be as many ants in the basin as grains of sugar. The simplest plan was to forget the existence of the creatures, help oneself, and then make one's servant fish them out of what one was drinking. Joseph did not think this extraordinary, neither did I.

But that evening his mouth was set in so unusual a fashion that even the important business in which he was engaged was not sufficient to explain it.

"Master," he said at last, "do you know that Ketaka has been all day in the house of Lieutenant Biret ? "

It had pained Joseph to see that Ketaka and I were faithful to one another. He would have liked to play the part, not only of Ganymede in our establishment, but also of Mercury, because of the profits accruing therefrom. I told him forcibly that he was a vile slanderer. But an hour later I was weak enough to question Ketaka.

"Have I been in the house of Lieutenant Biret ? " she said. "Of course ! Do you not know that the Porcelain Statue has left him, that he has no wife, and that she is my sister ? "

"That is enough ! you go to-night ! "

"It is dark, wait till to-morrow," she

replied tranquilly. "It is not fitting for a woman to be in the street at this hour."

"Go!" I repeated.

Ramary ran up and kissed me.

"Oh, Ramilina! why are you angry? Since it is Lieutenant Biret, and since Sary-Bakoly has gone, she had to take her place; it is the custom, else she would have been shamed."

In her grief, she pressed her nose against my cheek, the old Malagasy way of kissing.

"Go!" I said still more roughly to Ketaka.

Her sombre gaze never fell, and, pointing to me, she said to her sister:

"*Afabaraka izy!* He is dishonoured!"

An hour later she had gone without a murmur, without even seeing me again, finding it impossible to ask for pardon.

I was dishonoured! Ramary repeated the phrase. The insult I had shown her sister was unpardonable. The customs of her race compelled Ketaka to take the place vacated by Sary-Bakoly. She had fulfilled an ancient and indefeasible duty, and in sending her away I had insulted the whole of her family.

"But I forgive you," said Ramary,

“because you are the friend of Galliac. I will compromise myself, quarrel with my people rather than leave this house where he will come back—Alas, will he indeed return!—but you are dishonoured and despised by all the others.”

Even Princess Zanak-Antitra said I was in the wrong. And as I was a widower, and Ramary very sad all by herself, she could think of nothing better than to send us an invitation to an afternoon dance at the palace. They would be only too pleased to welcome a European there, and Ramary could go ahead of me, while I could join her later. It was a great honour to be asked to any of these little private affairs, and the poor lonely little creature fairly jumped for joy.

“You must give me ten piastres, Rami-lina! Galliac will repay you. I must have ten piastres at least. I will have black silk shoes, *kiraro merinosy*, they are so pretty! I have the dress that I wore for the Feast of Tombs; it is beautiful, the colour of red copper, but I will put on a new jacket, and with white stockings and stays like the white ladies, I shall be very beautiful.”

Three days before the party a woman

came to dress her hair. She washed it first, then plastered it with rose-pommade. After that—and it took the best part of a day to do—she plaited it into a quantity of tiny plaits, much in the same way that the manes of horses are arranged in France. The plaits were undone the next day, and the hair fell loose, rippling over her shoulders like black and shining waves. On the morning of the great day, with the help of Joseph, it was twisted into a complicated chignon.

On the stroke of two she went off, as proud as possible of the four hired slaves who carried her *filanzane*—for she had taken good care to go in state—of her glittering dress which I am afraid did not fit as well as it might have done, proud too of having substituted stiff stays for her childish bodice. And over all this attempt at a fashionable toilette, came her *lamba* with its modest folds, giving at a distance a flowing supple elegance, a delicate charm, and a touch of antique beauty to her monkey-like grace.

She took her departure, and after her new silk shoes had pattered down the stairs, I remained alone, thinking of the way she used to walk along the borders of Lake

Antsahadinta, as with upright carriage and head erect, her bare feet stole silently through the long grass and her rosy heels lay flat upon the ground.

Then I called my porters, and went in my turn to the Petit-Palais where the party was to take place.

This palace was situated at the other end of Roove, the old sacred city that had formerly contained the whole of Tananarivo; its light wooden arcades, which sprang from capitals of a warm brown colour, rose high in the air. As I drew near I heard the sound of a cheap piano. I went in.

The queen was seated upon her eternal gilded throne at the end of a square room. She was at that time a thin, oldish woman and had had no children. Even if she had had children, it had been decided that they could never reign, as her husband Rainilaiarivony was not of noble birth. And yet the blood that flowed in her veins was not solely that of those remote Malay tribes, who, after long struggles which dated back to remote ages, had won their way as far as the red and barren plains of Madagascar, and had consequently taken the island for their own.

The diplomatic marriages of her ancestors with the thick-lipped Sakalave maidens were responsible for her dusky skin and harsh, protruding mouth. In her presence one felt strongly that, in spite of her assumed yet wonted dignity, her intelligence and craftiness, there lay hidden feelings of restrained violence and sustained ill-will, perhaps even a bitter, mute, and burning desire for vengeance.

No one made a mystery of the fact that the French conquerors accused her of treachery ; there were strange stories told of letters signed by her, and sealed with her seal, found upon the insurgents. Yet these same conquerors went in full uniform to her functions, and danced with her maids of honour. And, in this room, as they stood bowing and smiling, their eyes, their gestures, and their voices seemed to prophesy exile and death.

Ramary looked on at all this with joyful eyes that day, for she was happy and knew nothing of intrigues nor of threats. She jumped about with the handsome officers, chatted with her friends, and let herself be patronised by the imperious Zanak-Antitra, with whom she explored the neighbouring

rooms. Suddenly, putting her finger on her lip, she came to me and whispered :

“ Ramilina, come and see ! ”

We went into a little bare room, narrow as a prison, and hung with faded paper, and there I saw an old man who recognised and called me to his side.

It was Raini-tsimbazafy, the new Prime Minister. This post, which in former days had held a great and mighty power, had been given to him because he was thought to be stupid and inoffensive.

He sat in the mean room, clothed in a dirty dressing-gown, and gazed with anxious eyes at a document from the Residence which had to be signed by him.

“ I’ve just received this,” he said in a low voice. “ Where must I sign ? ”

When I had pointed out the place he went on timidly :

“ Is it true that you are going to pull down the house of Andrian-ampo-in-Imerina ? ”

This was a humble hut built of wood and straw in which the founder of the dynasty had lived ; it was from this hut that, aided by the first European settlers who, at one and the same time, prepared the rise and

downfall of the dynasty, he had marched forth on his conquest of the island. His successors had faithfully preserved the ancient dwelling-place, in spite of the huge modern palaces and the proud consciousness of progress.

The hut had been battered by wind and weather, but was carefully propped up and still held in the greatest reverence. The only persons allowed to enter, and tread upon its sacred soil, were those of noble blood. It had been guarded for thirty years by an old slave who had been the king's nurse and who had never entered that portion behind the central post reserved for freemen only. When she wished to go out of the hut she had to be carried, so that her servile feet should not contaminate the round stone which served as doorstep to the sacred dwelling.

"Is it really true," went on the old man humbly, "that you are going to demolish it?"

"There is some talk of improving Looove and the surroundings," I replied vaguely.

"It is said," he went on, ashamed of his superstition, "that when the five stones of its hearth have disappeared, the kingdom

will come to an end. All that you do is very good, but I do not always understand. I am very ill and very old. Do you think that France would let me go ? ”

As I did not reply, he looked wearily at the great seal, the symbol of his derisory power and added :

“ But I weary you, go and dance.”

If we had not come upon the scene with our Western culture, could it have survived—the attempt at civilisation which had built this palace, created this empire in less than a century, begun to assimilate our sciences and our religions with a certain amount of ease as though they had been familiar ideas lost awhile and found again ?

I think not. At the time of which I speak, I could see it crumbling to ruin, and, as if we, the conquerors, needed some excuse for what we had done, we made merry over the follies and vices of the conquered.

Some dancers had discovered in a distant room the Princess Rasendranoro, whom the queen, her sister, had shut up because, as usual, she was drunk. They brought her back with them, reeling and blaspheming and rolling her enormous bulk along, until she reached the throne upon which she

leaned, laughing. Beside her, Prince Rakota-mena, the heir-presumptive, who, some time before, had ordered the massacre of the French in the streets of Tananarivo, glared around him with bloodshot eyes like an angry bull under the galling yoke.

"Come away," I said suddenly to Ramary. "This place depresses me. Let us go and see the big palace, I have never been inside it."

This was not customary, but nothing could be refused to a white man. One of the officers bowed, appearing to think my fancy natural, charming, and ingenious, and led the way up the low irregular stairs. We passed through two large rooms with rosewood and ebony flooring, so dark, even at this early hour, that they seemed like underground caverns. We bumped against beds, against hideous pieces of European furniture, and Indian cabinets, whose eastern bizarrerie had for a brief space taken the fancy of sovereigns dead and gone, and which were now nothing in these attics. At last we reached the top of the palace, and leaned upon the rail that surrounded the roof. The eagle, the king of birds, adopted by the dynasty as its emblem, spread his

great bronze wings over our heads, and before us stretched the vast plain of Imerina.

Towards the west the light was already tinted with scarlet and crimson. The great hills, heaped pell-mell against each other, sloped down to the yellowing rice-fields; the swamps and the immense, undulating, treeless expanse of country stretched away as far as the foot of rugged Ankaratra, the holy mountain, above which hovered the great birds of prey who protect this abode of the holy dead.

At our feet lay the pillared houses, the gardens, the churches, intertwined and pressed close together all the way down the slopes, until they reached a big green field, between Ambohi-dzanahare and the sacred lake built by Radame. It was a bird's-eye and truly royal view of the town of Tananarivo made by the timid genius of a people now in the throes of death.

Suddenly a sound of voices came to us. We saw white-robed figures rushing to the courtyard of Roove, and from this crowd there went up a cry of pity, a groan of infinite horror, as a man, in rags and trembling all over, sank down upon the holy

threshold itself, muttering terrible things which we could not hear.

“*O mon Dieu,*” said Ramary, “what is the matter? Come and see, Ramilina, I’m afraid.”

We ran down the stairs. The queen’s guests were all out in the courtyard, looking at a nigger huddled on the ground before them. He was covered with blood that had dried, and left dirty marks upon his dusky skin. His arms had been hacked to pieces, and whitish muscles protruded from the shuddering flesh; he was shivering with fever. It was Rainibozy, Galliac’s chief bearer.

He recognised me, and said something in a monotonous, resigned voice, words he had probably repeated a hundred times since his arrival, and which were to him the end of his rôle, the end of the tragic story he had to tell.

“*Efa maty Ragalliac!* Monsieur Galliac has been killed!”

I uttered so furious and despairing a cry, that Ramary’s wail of anguish was not heard.

The man began to speak, holding out his bleeding, mutilated hands, and told a simple, horrible tale.

The Fahavales had attacked the little village where Galliac's caravan had stopped one night. He had held them off, however, with his splendid courage, stopping up the only entry to the village with huge round stones, and giving to its inhabitants the five guns he carried with him. The next morning he had tried to retreat on Tananarivo, but his bearers had left him and he was almost alone. Overcome with heat and fatigue, he had arrived at another village called Manantsoa, at about midday.

"Do not stop here, monsieur le *vazaha*," said the governor. "Go quickly, they will return !"

And they did return, in greater numbers, and bringing in their train all the people of the countryside who had smelt from afar the odour of pillage and had seen the passage of shining metal chests, which their rapacity imagined full of mysterious riches.

He had held out for over two hours, although wounded, and with death staring him in the face, in a house built of unburnt bricks. At last they dug a hole in the wall so as to be able to reach him, but the hole made, no one had dared enter. So they set fire to the roof, and he had been burned

to death, moaning out his agony, and perhaps his fear, his courage and sang-froid overcome by the horror of his hideous end.

The chief of the insurgents calmly awaited the end of the tragedy, and then searched for the body among the ruins. Bending over it for a moment with a knife in his hand he straightened himself almost as quickly, throwing to the waiting crowd a fragment of flesh torn from the charred remains. Rainibozy had defended himself at the door of the hut and they had hacked off his hands.

Ramary had taken refuge with her uncle Raini-maró. Prone on the upper gallery of the house, with bare arms thrust through her torn blue robe, she wailed aloud her misery. She kept up a continuous cry, her eyes brimming with heavy tears, the beautiful eyes that I had loved for their childishness and gaiety. It was night, and the ground all around was covered with little lighted candles. Human shapes moved around them, and there was a sound as of quiet conversation occasionally broken by a solemn and melodramatic moan, in response to a more desperate sob from the

woman who lay there weeping her heart out, wailing out her violent, childish and fugitive grief.

The mourners were our bearers and their wives and daughters, and relations of the little widow, who had come to join in the dreadful mourning; and all of them were drinking the rum offered, as custom would have it, by Ramary. Many of them were drunk and, crouching or stretched full length on the ground, listened to the concertinas or guitars hired for the funeral orgies; while others roasted in the open air whole quarters of beef attached to the end of long poles, and devoured them greedily.

All this at the expense of Raini-marō and his niece. The uncle, of majestic demeanour although as drunk as could be, carefully watched, in spite of the drawback of his condition, a plate which standing on a corner of the table was fast filling with an offering of small coins placed there by the mourners, who with much discretion thus defrayed the expenses of this funereal hospitality.

At last, however, one of the latter took up his *valila*, an instrument of bamboo tubes, and chanted the song of the abandoned one :

“I am none other than an errant morsel of bark that has sprung from the young shoots of the bamboo-tree ; but when I had riches the friends of my father and my mother loved me. When I spoke they were filled with confusion ; when I reproved them they bowed their heads. To the kinsmen of my father, I was a protection and a glory ; to the kinsmen of my mother, the generous shade against the noonday heat. I was unto them as the young spring heifer, I was their joy and their riches, she of whom it is said : Behold the great fig-tree, the pride of the gardens ! Behold the great mansion, the pride of the cities ! Behold protection, glory, splendour, pride ! Behold her who preserveth the memory of the dead ! For they were filled with admiration for me as for a tombstone, erect and tall ; they received me with cries of love, and with sonorous salutations.

“And now I am become as the errant bark, which has sprung from the shoot of the banana-tree. I am left alone, desolate, hated by the family of my father, rejected by the family of my mother. I am of no more worth than the stone on which the garments are spread to dry, and which is

put aside when the sky becomes stormy. O people! while I speak unto you, I speak unto myself, for I am worthy of reproach and dishonoured.”

Then altogether they uttered loud cries, and began the lament for the dead, a slow and tuneful chant. There were no consecutive words to it, only repeated exclamations and terms of despair :

“ O woe, woe, tears in the night ! O woe ! Behold her mother who weeps ! behold our friends who weep, our children who weep ! Behold our slaves who weep ! Tears, tears, tears in the night ! ”

She will never come back to the house of Dr. Andrianivoune, at Soraka, near Tananarivo, on the borders of Lake Anosy. Poor little desolate widow, when the first fierceness of her grief is over she will go, with her hair loose on her shoulders, to the house of her father, which stands by a brook that waters the sugar-canes.

And I shall never see her again, never, never ! Neither shall I again see Galliac, whose mutilated body lies in the red earth, nor my old love Ketaka, who will not forget her grievance against me.

Princess Zanak-Antitra also weeps beside me. Captain Limal has left Tananarivo, and ruin is all that remains of her great passion for him.

“Ramilina,” she said to me, “that wicked song is quite right. We are worthy of reproach and dishonoured, we are lost. Lost ! Before the white men came we did not understand, we did not even know if a man were our husband or our lover. But you came, you white men and you loved us, and you cared greatly about things we did not understand : fidelity, and virtue, of which the missionaries speak during school hours to the ignorant little native girls, while the handsome officers and the soldiers lie in wait for them as soon as they come out.

“Nevertheless, by slow degrees, we came to realise sometimes that such things really did exist, and then you left us. Dear little Ramary has one consolation. At least her lover is under the earth for always. He died, he did not abandon her. But do you think she will ever be able to live with a native husband now ? She will try, I know, when she gets old, but she will be miserable ; she will think all her life of the

white man who died, and of pleasures and affections of which the Malagasy is ignorant, and he will beat her for having tears in her heart.

“Do you not see, Ramilina, it is the same for our happiness as for our country, they are both crumbling to ruin. You white men will come over here in greater and greater numbers, with your real wives, the white women whom you keep all your lives, and who bear you children whom you do not disown, whose pictures stand in golden frames upon the mantelpieces of beautiful rooms. Then we shall be poor, unhappy, unfortunate, and jealous. There will be no more nobles, no more native government and no more honour. The people will be like dust, and the women like mud.”

Just at that moment the voice of one of the mourners was heard again. He chanted in a low harsh voice, and the women and children answered in chorus :

- “Ah tell me what is that before thee?”
- “I know not, I have not spoken with it.”
- “Ah tell me, what is that behind thee?”
- “I know not. It has not spoken.”
- “Why art thou still and motionless?”
- “Leave me, I have but just arisen.”
- “Why art thou haggard and fearful?”

"I am not fearful, I do but dream."

"But thou art trembling, thou art weeping."

"I do not tremble, I am cold."

"Then why art thou so sad?"

"Ah, I did not wish to appear sad, but he whom I loved is dead!"

"No, we must not weep," said Princess Zanak-Antitra. "If I must die dishonoured, what matter if it be to-day or to-morrow? Happy those who are yet alive! See how clear the stars appear! I am alone and you are alone; let us go away together. Am I not already your *amie* since I have shared your sorrow?"

BARNAVAUX, GENERAL

THE voice was shrieking grandiloquent insults in the Malagasy tongue :

“You are all cowards and sons of cowards ! You are unable to stand for fear, and fall into the grass like worms. Come down to us, and let us behold you. Come down and be slain ! The Sakalaves are not of the Hova blood. Their assegais are very long ; they have barrels full of gunpowder, and cases full of cartridges. May I become a leper, and my king become a leper, and all his people become lepers, if I do not fight to-day ! *Taïm-poury*, *taïm-poury*, you are *taïm-poury* ! ”

“*Taïm-poury* ” is a very ugly word which I need not translate. The Senegalese soldier, Oumar N'diaye, who had learned a little of the Malagasy language since he had been on the island—for he had married three wives—ground his teeth and raised himself upon his hands and knees, like a black panther about to spring.

“Lie down, Oumar,” said Barnavaux. “You shall be revenged later, when Limal’s detachment sends them flying.”

Oumar obediently lay down in the grass again. Barnavaux was only a private, but he was a white man, a good soldier, and belonged to the redoubtable Marine Infantry. Oumar knew all that, and trusted him. He could not, however, resist one chance shot, and his twelve Senegalese comrades followed his example. The hollow, cracked report of about thirty ancient Sakalave muskets replied from below, but without further result.

We could see nothing, nothing but the thick plantations of palm-trees in the lower valley, the beautiful palms of Boueni—noble trees with an air of disdainful simplicity about them. There were quantities of them. As far as the eye could see, in the warm light of day, they reared their smooth column-like trunks high above the lesser trees and bushes, and spread out their beautifully even, fan-like foliage. Each of them, however, like a haughty aristocrat, was separated from his fellows by a clear space, and kept to himself his own portion of air and sun.

Trees so handsome and noble-looking should have reigned alone over the countryside, without the help of the voice mentioned at the beginning of my story. Yet, after all, was it really the lieutenant of a little Sakalave king who had been uttering such magnificent invective since the morning? It seemed to me as though the voice expressed the anger of the forest itself, against us who had come thither to destroy it, for there is gold in Boueni, and gold and trees have ever been enemies. The trees are pulled up for the ground to be dug; the wood is used to rail in the galleries; the trunks are hollowed out to make channels to which the glittering gold adheres. Whole trees are burned down to make room, or for no reason at all, simply because the most wasteful and destructive animal in creation is not the monkey but man.

Barnavaux unbent sufficiently to explain to the Senegalese, in a tongue in which condescension and friendliness were adroitly mingled, the instructions given by Captain Limal. He had given orders that the Sakalaves were to be kept where they were until he arrived. He was approaching from the north, and would arrive before the close

of the day, and then, and only then would there be some sport.

The Senegalese, who were like great savage, yet obedient children, understood quite well what was meant, because Barnavaux's voice was firm and his language simple.

He rolled over on to his back and yawned.

"I want to know," he said, "why these Sakalave fellows are so plucky. They never till their land, they let their cattle run wild in the bush, and live half the time on roots themselves. Then they rest their guns on their thighs instead of shouldering them, which is against all rules. But they let themselves be killed and kill us quite neatly. It seems so absurd for people to let their own country go to rack and ruin, and then resent other people stepping in and making something of it. Now, in Imerina, the people can read and write just as well as any good French citizen. They have fields, fat cattle, harvests, churches, governors, Protestant pastors, Catholic priests, in fact, all the delights of civilisation, and yet they take to their heels at the merest trifle. I think they suffer from too much imagination!"

I laughed, but he went on :

“ Yes, they have too much imagination. Look at these Senegalese fellows, they don’t see any further afield than the end of their noses—and that a flat one—but they are excellent soldiers. Now the Imerina people foresee things, they calculate and exaggerate just as though they were in the habit of reading the papers. The consequence is you can make them believe that a scarecrow is a whole army. When I covered myself with glory at Ambatoumalaze——”

We were on the top of a limestone plateau with the sun gently sinking on our left ; the Sakalave chief was still howling in the valley ; weary of waiting, from time to time we fired a salute over the summits of the disdainful palms, and the story that Barnavaux told me that evening, I will now relate to you.

“ At the time of which I am speaking my comrade Razowski and I were in sole charge of the station at Vouhilène. That was a pet method of the general’s for keeping the country in order. There would be block-houses at a good distance from each other and a couple of men in each village, so that

there was a universal and salutary respect for a uniform which was ubiquitous. But you know the number of villages there are in Imerina! The whole of our regiment ended by being dispersed, man by man, over an area of about thirty leagues.

“Andral, our colonel, did not approve of this arrangement; he went to the general and said, ‘I’d like to know what I am commanding now—a squad? I’d better become a corporal and have done with it!’ ‘What’s the matter with you?’ answered the general. ‘I’ve divided the country among your men and they are responsible for whatever may happen. That is how aristocracies sprang into existence in the far-away ages. Your *marsouins*¹ have gone up in the world; they are now the equals of dukes, marquesses, or barons.’

“According to that way of looking at things, I was Baron of Vouhilène and Colonel Andral was no one, and of course that clearly proves that the general was exaggerating. But there was a grain of truth in what he said. Ah, when I think of the days when I, Private Barnavaux, was also a lord! when looking around me at the men,

¹ A soldier of the Marines or Colonial Infantry.

the houses, the land and the water, I could say to myself 'I'm boss!' when between me and the President of the Republic there were only two of higher rank than myself, and those two the general and the governor. I shall always regret those days! That is what comes from drinking of the cup of power!

"Vouhilène, like all the old villages of Imerina, was situated at the top of a hill of red soil, and round it went a trench made by the inhabitants at some remote period or the other. This trench was now half-filled up, but had once been very deep. The only way of getting into the village was through two doors, made, native-fashion, of tall, pillar-like blocks between which was fixed a huge, round stone. At night this gigantic slab was held in place by quantities of smaller stones and the whole arrangement was magnificently barbaric.

"When I arrived there, this enclosure contained scarcely anything but tombs, very ancient tombs, covered with huge granite slabs on which were perched little wooden chapels, formerly used to contain the food placed there for the consumption of the departed. These miniature houses

were practically the only ones that remained, and the dead were left in peace, for the villagers had gradually gone down the hill and had built a fairly large village which they called Ambatoumalaze, on the other side of a big rice-field. Beyond these pleasantly-situated, almost comfortable houses, with their neat straw roofs, stretched a huge plain, half under water and broken up by dykes. It was tilled from one end to the other, looking deliciously green and fresh; with its scattered hamlets it resembled a field dotted with mole-hills. Beyond the plain, the hummocks of red earth began again, and still further away, little columns of smoke could be discerned in the growing dusk, for until the French took possession of the land the whole countryside literally swarmed with native humanity.

“War and insurrection had scattered many of them who lived by pillage, or who died of hunger—they died oftener than not. The Fahavales were among these maddened creatures. Their numbers grew less each day, for the very good reason that they either made up their minds to die or to go back to their villages and settle down quietly. But, when they reached home,

they found their rich stores plundered, their oxen stolen ; and as their fields had not been sown that year they were indeed in a deplorable condition. They were the more to be pitied, inasmuch as we were forcing upon them the beauties of perfected government, with its taxes on cattle, taxes on market produce, forced labour and road-making, in fact, anything which could add to the importance of the lengthy reports sent home and published in the French papers. There were days on which I sincerely pitied my vassals.

“ Stewart, the Protestant parson, who had a school and a kind of church at Ambatoumalaze, used to come and see us nearly every day, and bewail the condition of the country. He wasn’t a bad sort. He had lived for thirty years in Madagascar and had become more Malagasy than English. He had the most indulgent sympathy and, at the same time, an incurable distrust for his flock. He imagined he could speak French—in which belief he was most outrageously mistaken—but he was a white man, at any rate, and we got on fairly well together.

“ My chum Razowski, whom I called Razo for short, made great raids on his

library and spent whole days reading Renan's *Vie de Jésus* and another book on the same subject written by a German doctor. He had passed examinations in France and had made speeches in public before he joined the *marsouins*. He said he was a positivist, a partisan of absolute freedom, and an anti-clerical. We have a few fellows like him in the Marine Infantry, which is a crack corps. They go one better in the Legion, where I've heard they've got a bishop.

"I don't know whether it was the water from the rice-fields or whether it had anything to do with the books, but Razo fell ill, dangerously ill. It was fever. You know the way it kills people, in a treacherous fashion that has yet a certain poetry about it. You are in a perpetual fever, which hardly accelerates the beating of your pulse, you are always tired, and you have attacks of nerves like a woman; you can't eat and you feel unspeakably weary of life. The end comes gently, and you give in quietly to be the better able to sleep. I used to try and cheer Razo. I would say, 'Don't go and kick the bucket yet, or you'll leave me all alone with my barony to look after!'

“He would just smile for a moment, and then be deep in his book again ; or he would lie and dream, or talk the wildest nonsense. A lieutenant who came to inspect the station saw he was in a bad way, and said he was going to send the major to see him. The major did not turn up, but in his place Soeur Ludine, from the Dispensary, came in one morning, and from that time she got into the habit of dropping in every four or five days to try and do something for the poor fellow.

“The parson was quite polite when he met her. She used to give Razo good advice and speak to him of his mother ; she used also to beg him to repent and save his soul alive, but he always replied that he was a positivist, anti-clerical, and a free-thinker, and that he would die as he had lived, like a man. Then the parson would arrive and join in the discussion. Sometimes he took Soeur Ludine’s side against Razo, and from time to time joined forces with him against the sister. At last Razo, who really had not the strength to argue, would turn to the wall and fairly weep with nervous excitement.

“Sometimes Narcisse, the mulatto school-

master, would come up to the station with the parson and then it would be another kind of comedy. You remember the famous order with regard to the obligatory teaching of French in the schools. Well, the English parsons would rather have taught their pupils Greek than go; they set their wits to work and made up their minds to obey the order. Books were sent over from France, teachers called into requisition, recruited even from among the Senegalese.

“Stewart had been more zealous than any, for he had beaten up a mulatto from the Island of Réunion, and in so doing had followed out a very simple line of argument, that, as the island had been a French possession for years, its inhabitants must necessarily speak our beautiful tongue. Narcisse himself was absolutely sure of his knowledge, and was in the habit of bringing us his best pupils so that we might admire their progress. ‘Now,’ Razo would say, ‘let’s have the reading lesson: “La Seine fait de nombreux circuits.” Read that, Rakoutou.’

“And Rakatou would read, ‘La Seine fait de nombreux *cirikits*.’ For you know the Malagasies cannot pronounce the ‘u’ and put a vowel between all consonants

to make the word easier to pronounce. Mr. Stewart and Narcisse would be furiously angry.

“‘*Seurcouittes*,’ Stewart would say, ‘*seurcouittes*! It is not at all difficult!’ ‘*Cicuits*,’ shrieked Narcisse, ‘you not pronounce at all!’

“Thereupon the best pupils of the school at Ambatoumalaze, completely losing their heads, would utter the most inhuman sounds, and Razo make himself ten times worse, by breathlessly inveighing against a pretended civilisation such as this, which extirpated the natives, gave them every vice under the sun, taught them to forget their own language in order to learn a senseless gibberish, and turned the free sons of the tropics into caricatures such as Narcisse.

“Narcisse would then protest that he was a Frenchman with a vote in Réunion and that he would write to Paris and complain that he had been insulted by a wretched soldier. When Soeur Ludine happened to be present, she would make peace between them, tidy the room, make the boys sweep up the floor and put a piece of beef on to cook. Then she would get into her *filanzane*, and go back bravely in the same fashion

that she had come, that is to say without any escort ; she used to say she was only an old woman and had nothing to fear from any one on the road for every one knew her. And that was perfectly true.

“I was boss and kept things going. It was quite a nice job, but very complicated. I had registers containing the names of all my vassals. There had even been an idea of photographing them so that they could be the more easily recognised, but this plan had to be given up because of their racial prejudices. They took to their heels as soon as they saw the camera, thinking it was going to steal their shadows, which they confound with their souls. I used to receive two or three orders during the week, with instructions and circulars. I had piles of little printed forms, all different, which I had to fill in and send to Tananarivo. Then I had to pick out the men for the gangs, and, as the promotion of the authorities depended upon the number of miles of roadway accomplished during the year, there was a tremendous number of men employed at such work.

“There would, for instance, be an order that the natives were to work for fifty days

in the year at four sous a day ; but, as many of them were either dead or missing, those who remained took their place and worked nine hours a day for a hundred and fifty days. At the end of six months, the heavy winter rains having demolished the roads, which were nothing more or less than narrow mud paths, everything had to be started over again. It was quite evident that this little game did not improve the health of the men under my jurisdiction. I have seen as many as four hundred start off, spade on shoulder, and only two hundred return. All the rest had died. The Hovas are a poor race ; they live on next to nothing and it takes very little to finish them off. The forest kills them as though the very trees in it were poisoned.

“ All this sort of thing worried me, and I felt very lonesome among a people who, all said and done, might well bear me a grudge ; for, although I did nothing on my own authority, in their eyes I was responsible for everything.

“ However, the country appeared to be at peace and the people delightfully polite. Even Rakoutoumangue, the *tompou-mena-kele*, that is to say the former lord of the

manor, the real baron, came to pay me a visit.

“Now you must remember that before my arrival it had been he who received the tithes, he who extorted payment when he intervened in disputes, he whom every one saluted when he made a solemn tour of his domains, followed by his slaves and parasites, and lying at his ease in his old-fashioned *filanzane* carried by twelve slaves. Being the usurper, I pretended to be perfectly at my ease, and also put on an exaggeratedly dignified air, but I couldn’t help wondering what the old booby wanted with me.

“He began by telling me some story about his wife, who had just divorced him according to the Malagasy law, in order to marry some person of no account, and claimed a third part of the common property, declaring that some field or the other fell to her share. ‘And the men of this village, will swear that the field belonged to my father before me and not to that wretched she-swine, that mother of few children!’

“All this had ^{very} little to do with me. We were seated ^{at} the table, drinking rum, which I had ordered, and while he was speaking I watched ten little whitish objects

moving hither and thither, like marionettes, on the cotton tablecloth—his finger-nails, which out of vanity he had allowed to grow long like an old-time aristocrat. The man was not civilised, we had not been able to win him over, for he still adhered to customs that seemed ridiculous to Frenchmen and did not seek to flatter by imitating us. His *flanzane*, his followers, even his language, smacked of independence and the past. The more I looked at him, the more angry and anxious I grew, and yet not a single one of his gestures betrayed either insolence or dislike. His courtesy was both noble and unaffected. He sent for the ox which he had brought as a gift, expressed a hope that Razo, shivering on his camp bed, would soon be well again, and departed with much ceremony.

“ ‘Now he knows the resources of Vouhilène,’ I thought. ‘Commander of the garrison, Barnavaux ; chief of the staff, Barnavaux ; colonel, captain, lieutenant, artillery, cavalry, infantry—Barnavaux ! The rest of the garrison on the sick list. We can’t muster strong !’

“ Parson Stewart felt even more strongly that things were going badly. The Mala-

gasies went to his church, but never confided in him, although he had lived with them for over twenty years, and was as good an Englishman as they make 'em, that is to say charitable, reserved, proud and timid. He guessed there was trouble brewing, because the good people of Ambatoumalaze were sending their cattle to graze upon the uplands, and stealing out at night to hide their rice, while all the worst rascals in the district were looking strangely pleased with life.

"I advised him to come and sleep at the station every night, and to let his parishioners get on as best they could. He refused, saying that, if he allowed them to think he was afraid, the white people might as well give themselves up for lost.

"That is the view they take of life in Imerina. The Hovas are as impressionable as women. The general had doled out two or three rifles and a few assegais to the chief men in the villages, so that they could defend themselves if need be. Should the white men show the white feather, however, I wondered what these chief men would do with their weapons, and much preferred that this problem should remain unanswered.

As long as they went no further than to hide the rifles in their manure heaps away from the insurgents, there was not much harm done.

“One day, Soeur Ludine came over from Tananarivo. Razo was very ill. He could not stand, and his skin was as yellow and transparent as oiled paper, and he was dreadfully depressed. Suddenly, as we were doing our best to cheer him up, we heard the report of a gun, not the sharp report of a Lebel, but the prolonged splutter of the insurgents’ Snyders.

“I have never found it possible to listen to the sound of the first shot without a tightening of my heart-strings, a kind of dull anxiety, for who can tell what is to follow? Once the struggle has begun, thought flies to the four winds, events follow rapidly on one another; you parry blows as in a game of battledore and shuttlecock, you leap to right and left and lay about you with the quick blood beating furiously in your veins. When it is all over you often feel utterly exhausted; before you begin, you are nearly always afraid of not being equal to the job, and that is a horrible feeling.

“Soeur Ludine and I looked at each other

with set mouths, and without uttering a word rushed to the terrace. The sun was already going down ; the great plain was fresh with young green, and the red hills reared their heads high in the clear rain-bathed atmosphere. Here and there, the still water showed through a bare space in the rice-field, and the eye was caught by its dancing reflection. But beyond Mangabe and Antsirika, two huge columns of smoke rose high in the air : the insurgents had passed along there, killing, burning, and destroying, and now they were marching on Ambatoumalaze in two long straggling companies ; they were so far away and looked so tiny that they made me think of ants crossing a sandy path at home.

“ But these ants were in a mad rage. In a few moments we were able to hear the sound of their footsteps, and the two bands mingled into one. Starving with hunger, and filled with hatred, they came along, headed by their yelling magicians, and their grotesque scarlet idols borne aloft on stretchers ; it was a revival of old barbarism ; these people were hurling their ancient gods themselves, to the assault of the schools, the churches, the whole of Christianity in

fact ; the Christianity which, like a sneaking spy, had been the first to invade their country, even before the arrival of the military. ‘What will happen to the parson?’ cried Soeur Ludine. ‘Poor Stewart!’

“We could see him in the school playground assembling his children to take them up to the guard-house. They were only just in time. The mad brutes were already in Ambatoumalaze, the vanguard, which I had not noticed before, having slipped along through the high rice-plants. Now, covered with mud from head to foot, they appeared upon the scene, drunk with ferocity and enthusiasm. We saw a man come out of a house, clasp his hands and fall to the ground in desperate appeal. They beat out his brains with a stick, and that was the first murder.

“The schoolchildren and the villagers made for the school. Fortunately it was built of brick, had a slated roof and was enclosed by a high wall. Stewart had two old rifles, and that was all. He might manage to hold out for half an hour, and after that——

“A shudder crept over me. I thought of the visit of Rakatoumangue, and re-

membered that the old devil knew the strength of the garrison. He knew that there weren't even two of us, as Razo was at the point of death. The thought filled me with fury, and I rapidly buckled on my belt. 'Where are you off to?' said poor old Razo. 'I'm forming a column. Do you think I'm going to sit quiet and let those brutes pillage my land, and burn down my houses? I am the Baron of Vouhilène! Then I can't let poor Stewart, nor even that fool of a Narcisse, be roasted like rats in a cage. We should immediately be surrounded, the whole countryside would rise up and the insurrection spread as far as Tananarivo. We may as well put a stop to it at once; it's the better way.'

"Razo got up and tried to put on his trousers, but he grew giddy, gazed wildly round, and would have fallen, had I not held him.

Soeur Ludine picked up the trousers and put them on a chair, she liked to see things tidy.

Then she took Razo's rifle and said resolutely to me, 'I'm going down with you.'

"I understood: the idea of the poor little Malagasy children being burned to

death in the school filled her heart with horror and turned her brain.

But I could not imagine Soeur Ludine in the guise of a doughty warrior—it was too absurd. ‘Do not bring disgrace upon the habit you wear,’ I said. ‘It is not fitting that you carry arms. What we want now is a man in uniform to uphold the dignity of the garrison, and it would be a fine thing for those devils to find the guard-house defended by a woman. That would be the simplest method of showing them that we consider ourselves as good as lost!’ ‘Do you really think so? Well, that’s not much to worry about.’ She untied Razo’s bundle of clothes, took out a pair of trousers and a tunic, and without saying another word ran into the kitchen, which consisted of a little hut situated at the other end of the terrace.

“Three minutes later she re-appeared, dressed as a *marsouin*, with the pith helmet, the yellow-striped trousers and the tunic which, on her, fell in the strangest folds and creases. She did not seem in the least embarrassed, however, for she had risen too high above such feelings. Her little, short, round body made her look like some

child of the regiment, while her face, old, wrinkled, and withered, gleamed with enthusiasm. Razo was overcome with emotion, and I could neither joke nor protest, for my eyes were full of tears. 'You are quite mad, Soeur Ludine,' I said at last, 'but I love you for it. Nom de Dieu ! Soeur Ludine, we'll smash them yet !'

"At that moment I felt capable of overcoming an army of a hundred thousand men. Everything seemed easy to me, everything seemed touching and sublime. It was not breath that I had in my body, but, as it were, a clear flame that coursed through my veins and filled me with rapture. I felt insanely, gloriously happy. I felt that I wanted to burst into song and shout, to perform marvellous feats of courage, to give vent to all the tumult of feeling within me. I wanted to do things for the mere fun of doing them. I am telling you exactly what I felt at that moment.

"However, there was no time to lose. Five or six houses were already in flames, and three or four men who had been clubbed or stabbed lay with their life-blood ebbing upon the ground. The insurgents fired at

random, just for the sake of making a noise, or to show that there were many of them. Their howls, at a distance, sounded like the recital of a litany in some church. The sound rose, grew, and then died away, only to be heard over and over again.

“The school door had been closed, and Stewart was shooting through a loophole. The repeated sound of that one gun chilled me to the marrow. It was so isolated, so slight and so fluctuating. It was now five o’clock, and the sun was very low in the sky, casting its long rays slantwise upon the rice-field which separated the guard-house from the village. After all, a rice-field is exactly like a river which contains mud instead of water, with green grass growing on the top of the mud. You can only cross by way of the dykes that traverse it.

“‘We have got to produce a tremendous and unexpected effect,’ I remarked to Soeur Ludine. ‘You are the second army corps. Go down behind the guard-house, turn to the right, and cross the rice-field by the third dyke over there. Don’t weaken your line of defence by loitering on the way, or you might lose the stragglers! Once you

are on the dyke the enemy will catch sight of you, and then you must fire. I adjure you, by all the saints in paradise, not to attempt to aim, only shoot! Use up all the cartridges in the magazine, keep on loading and firing; you must make as much noise as you can, that's all.'

"The Sister began to laugh just like any brave man. 'That's all I'm here for,' she said. 'But how do you load the thing?' She held out the Lebel, looking as much at sea as a nigger with a postal order, the meaning of which he doesn't understand. 'Ah, of course!' I said. And I showed her how the precious weapon worked. She tumbled to it almost at once. 'I must do first this, then this, then this—is that all right? Very well. Au revoir.'

"As she was going I called out to her, 'I've forgotten to tell you in what direction to go.' 'Holy Virgin,' she exclaimed, 'as if that were necessary! to the school of course!' and off she went alone, in order of battle.

"The reason why I wished her to go in that direction was that some of the gardens were surrounded with great earthen walls which would protect her during the first



"YOU ARE THE SECOND ARMY CORPS"

part of her journey, and also the rice-field was narrower near the third dyke.

“ You must understand that, under the circumstances, it was no easy matter to cross the rice-field ; you had to make your way along a little wall and were in full view of whoever happened to be on the look-out. I waited until she got to the dyke so as to lend her any assistance in my power, and I had not long to wait. She had run along like a young girl and had begun a steady fire which, by the way, was quite out of range. That did not matter, however, distance made no kind of difference to her, for she would not have hit a cathedral at ten paces.

“ I have never in all my life seen such conscientious work. She went along, fired all the contents of her rifle, went a little further, stopped to re-load, and then went off again more quickly than ever, with the nimble tread of a *chasseur à pied*, doing exactly as I did, in fact, for I was progressing along my dyke with the majesty of a veritable Napoleon crossing the bridge at Arcola.

“ It is at least eighteen hundred metres from the guard-house at Vouhilène to the village, but we had opened fire notwithstanding this fact. The effect of such a

proceeding was immediately visible. The wretches who were engaged in an attack upon the schoolhouse turned round in astonishment. They were evidently labouring under the delusion that there was but one able-bodied Frenchman at Vouhilène, and that he would not be fool enough to show fight.

“My insolence impressed them deeply, and as for Soeur Ludine’s demonstration, that had not been in the programme at all. As you know, the insurgents were only miserable, starving creatures. They had been driven to extremities by their wizards, and a large number of recruits had joined the ranks because of the forced labour which exasperated this peaceful folk beyond all bearing. The real reason of their boldness, however, was the firm conviction that no one in the village would attempt to resist them, neither the soldiers at the guard-house nor the villagers themselves. And now, here was my garrison making a sortie ! Can you guess what happened ? ”

“ *Parbleu*,” I said, “ probably, when they saw you on the warpath, the virtuous public men of Ambatoumalaze suddenly discovered the rifles bestowed upon them by

a paternal government, and made use of them for the better defence of the new institutions of Madagascar, and not for their resistance, to which latter, by the way, they had very nearly succumbed ! ”

“ You know the country well ! That’s exactly what did happen. The few yellow-skinned citizens to whom we had given arms experienced the most useful remorse and the most healthy anxiety at our approach. In their mind’s eye they already saw themselves sent up for judgment. They shuddered at the thought of their goods confiscated, and their cattle slaughtered for the consumption of the Marine Infantry, therefore they came to our aid. Yes, they came to our aid ! They emerged from their houses, surrounded by their sons or their dependants, all of whom were armed with assegais ! Soeur Ludine and I were only half-way across the rice-field, when the insurgents were already receiving the defenders’ bullets in their backs.”

“ And so,” I interrupted, “ you found that there were at least three thousand of you when you at last reached safety.”

“ Now you are exaggerating ! ” replied Barnavaux simply. “ The chief men only

numbered three, plus about a dozen fellows with assegais. Besides, instead of advancing, they wisely and prudently retreated, for they had not the least desire to fight, but only wished to prove the immaculateness of their sentiments. Also they marched ahead of us, which put a still greater distance between themselves and danger. But it was a fine sight to see the Ludine and Barnavaux columns operating their junction on the other side of the rice-field and being received by the honest allies with eloquent protestations of boundless devotion.

“I admired, but did not marvel at their eagerness to reveal their identity. ‘It is I, Ratsimamangue. You know me, brave chief, and worthy lord of Vouhilène!’ ‘It is I, Rainimarou. Forget not to tell the general how brave I am!’

“I rapidly shook hands with these worthies. After all they were not lacking in a certain courage, for there were at least a hundred of the enemy round the school-house and they were firing at pretty close quarters. I made them all fire a volley, then ordered them to take shelter for the time being, behind a crumbling wall, and to keep their wits about them.

“What happened after that is rather confused in my mind. The twilight had lasted a bare twenty minutes, and now it was night, black night. The burning houses lit up the surroundings as such bonfires usually do, that is to say very garishly and very badly. The chief effect they seemed to have was to make the situation more dramatic.

“Apparently the enemy had left the schoolhouse now, and were turning their attention to us, which gave a little respite to old Stewart. I knocked over a few of them, but I was very anxious. There were too many of them, far too many, and if I got disabled the whole game was up for everybody. The fear of this made me extra careful; I had hoped that on hearing the sound of my attack the other villages would arm and come to our help, and I burned with impatience at their non-arrival.

“Then suddenly an extraordinary thing happened. We heard the cannon thunder out from the guard-house at Vouhilène.

“Now they had never had a cannon at Vouhilène! And yet we could see a strong red light and hear a sullen muffled detonation, which could not be mistaken for the

report of a Lebel—it sounded solemn, serious and impressive. But not a single ball fell, all this cannonading was without visible result. I could make neither head nor tail of it. It was Soeur Ludine who first hit upon the solution. ‘It’s Razo,’ she cried, ‘dear old Razo! He’s letting off the fireworks that we got for the fourteenth of July!’

“That was it. The poor dying fellow had got hold of the fireworks and was letting off the big ones one after the other. As the parson had insisted upon giving his contribution towards the celebration of our national festival, we had a good many. And thus, the free-thinking element, represented by Razo, played its part in the celebrated battle of Ambatoumalaze, and shared in the victory.

“For it was victory! Surrounded by flames and thunder, the guard-house at Vouhilène appeared to contain unconquerable armies and inexhaustible resources. Then, of course, all the neighbouring villages joined in the fun and marched against the insurgents. On all sides did the chief men feel their courage stir; they came from Antsirika, from Talatakely, and from

Ampasimbe-la-Sablonneuse ; in twenty-five minutes the whole countryside was swarming with steadfast defenders of the legitimate French Republican government. And among them all, superb and intrepid, I saw that old wretch of a Rakatoumangue himself, followed by a troop of passably well-armed men. Things had turned against him, so he turned with them, and against his old friends. He had an eye to doing things in style and came marching along, preceded by a man bearing the French colours, which he had picked up goodness knows where, loot from the house of some white man most probably ; and his arrival seemed to me the most comical part of the whole business.

“ But what did it matter after all ? Isn’t it smarter to force your enemy to fight for you than to kill him ? Isn’t it good enough for a play to make the treachery of a traitor exactly the opposite to what he intended it to be ? It was with absolute assurance and a kind of calm enthusiasm that I ordered my men to the attack, and very gallantly they acquitted themselves. Rakoutomangue, the high-minded, came very near to giving up the ghost, his Snyder rifle

having burst ; the second *benitany*, that is great chief, was slightly wounded in the groin. Another of the Hovas was polished off by one of his brothers-in-arms, a little mistake which did not prevent him from being reported as killed by the enemy ; it all comes into the reckoning you know, and that is the way war bulletins are drawn up.

“ All these warriors, filled with tardy enthusiasm, were yelling ‘ hou ! hou ! ’ and firing at the *lambas* of their adversaries, the latter doing their utmost to escape the while, for now it was their turn to be hemmed in. The braves amongst the Fahavales also cried ‘ hou ! hou ! ’ and blew into conches, intending to convey the impression that they would defend themselves to the death. But, as soon as they realised things were looking extremely serious, they tried to make themselves scarce with a docility truly typical of the Malagasy. However, they no longer had the time nor the chance to do so.

“ Then began the great final massacre ; the poor devils were dragged out of the rice-field, and out of the ditches where they lay hidden, and shot. One ancient man, covered with amulets, fell down and embraced my feet. I would have saved him,

if I could, but my allies seized him, propped him up against a bank, and blew his brains out without more ado. All that remained to be seen of the poor wretch were two legs sticking up out of the grass with white marks upon the black skin, as though death had given a sudden skin disease to the poor old beggar. That sort of thing can't be helped, it's war. Not a pleasant thing to witness. Soeur Ludine trembled with the horror of it all.

"Realising that escape was impossible, some of the vanquished made a desperate resolve. The fact that Stewart and his scholars had been able to hold out against them, led them to suppose that the school-house was a sure stronghold, and they made one last attempt to force the place. They got as far as the door of the principal building and staved it in with a great log. Just at that moment we entered the court-yard and I saw that excellent man, Parson Stewart, looking out of a window, absolutely beside himself with passion. 'You won't go away?' he cried. 'You won't go? Very well then, may God forgive me my sin!'

He had dragged up the granite paving-

stones from the ground-floor in order to barricade the doors should the enemy manage to force the enclosure. He now seized one of these slabs of stone and hurled it with all his strength upon the head of the man nearest him. I saw the fellow fall like a log across the doorway, and all was over. The others threw down their arms, and the school-yard was filled with a terrible silence. These men, mad with rage only a minute ago, now stood submissive and quiet, awaiting death with the most incomprehensible and disdainful indifference. They considered themselves as good as dead, to all intents and purposes they were dead—that is the Hova exactly.

“It has always been a mystery to me that they could be so cowardly at ordinary times, then so suddenly roused to fury, then again absolutely resigned, not only to death, but to the most awful tortures. My men killed a few more as they stood defenceless there, and I had great difficulty in getting them to spare the others.

“When I had finished what I had to do, I looked up at the window over the door. Old Stewart was still there, absolutely motionless, with the most imbecile yet

terrible expression it has ever been my lot to see, upon his face : it looked frozen, and his eyes were starting from his head. The shock had been too much for him, and the poor fellow who had been so brave during the struggle had now collapsed. ‘Hullo, Mr. Stewart,’ I called out, ‘what keeps you from letting us in?’ He started like a man waking out of sleep, came down, dragged away the paving-stones that he had propped against the door, drew the bolts, and threw it open.

“The first thing that met his eyes was the man he had killed a few minutes before. The corpse was lying on the ground in a painful, twisted position, and the great block of granite, one corner of which was bloody, still lay on his neck.

“Old Stewart threw himself down upon his knees beside it, shuddering from head to foot and crying, ‘I’ve killed a man! I’ve killed a man! You must turn away from me, for I’ve killed a man!’ Tears were running down his cheeks, and he groaned despairingly as though he had been guilty of the greatest crime. And his children, the Protestant converts whom he had defended and saved, ceased their cries of

joy and their embracing, and gazed at him in mute astonishment.

“Then I heard Soeur Ludine say, ‘Well, for my part, I can truthfully say that I have killed no one!’ This was true to the letter, for to save her life she could not have shot straight. If anyone in the world could boast that they had never harmed a hair of anyone’s head it was certainly that innocent old saint of a woman; and all this proves the importance of moral strength, as the papers say. For both Razo with his fireworks and Soeur Ludine with her Lebel had only acted a comedy, and yet they had won a great victory under the orders of General Barnavaux. But my rise in rank was never officially mentioned!

“Stewart looked up when he heard the voice of Soeur Ludine, and the costume in which he saw her attired finished him.

“The courtyard was full of corpses that my men were rifling, of wounded men who moaned very gently in true Malagasy fashion, which is always resigned. The women, too, had appeared upon the scene and were making an awful din, bewailing their dead, their houses, and their possessions with equal vehemence and piercing eloquence.

There was a vile smell in the air—the smell of burning and of butchery, of living men covered in sweat, and of blood. Soeur Ludine was white as death. She felt sick at heart. She wanted to sit down and weep her heart out, and also, as I could plainly see, she felt she must do something. Here was real work cut out for her to do, the wounded and dying to attend to, the work she had done with unfailing regularity and devotion for thirty years. And for the first time that day she looked down at herself and realised that her costume was not perhaps quite the thing for a person of her calling.

“I don’t know what Mr. Stewart was thinking at the moment, but he smiled. ‘Is it really you, Soeur Ludine? May God in His mercy be our judge! But as long as we live, you and I, I think we must never speak of what we have done to-day.’

“Now you see what hypocrites the English are! And yet Soeur Ludine, although not English, was of the same opinion. When writing my report, I said that she had behaved like a heroine, and had saved Ambatoumalaze, as Joan of Arc had saved Orleans. She tore it up and declared, in

exactly the same way as Stewart, that it must not be mentioned. It was between herself and the good God, but she did not want to become a stumbling-block to the community.

“And that’s how it happened. I wrote another report, a beauty, in which I clearly proved that I alone had defended Ambatoumalaze, while Razo let off fireworks on the guard-house terrace like a true artilleryman, and Rakoutoumangue had come to our rescue with a band of notables whose loyalty was worthy of the highest praise. The result of my report was that that rascal of a Rakoutoumangue was appointed governor at Amboudirane with a salary of 1,200 francs, which he increased at least tenfold by sweating his people. Narcisse received the academic palms as the result of a letter which he wrote to the authorities in Paris, declaring himself to be the author of the great deeds disclaimed by old Stewart, who declined to take the responsibility for such shocking and unchristian behaviour. Razo and I were promoted to the rank of corporal. But poor Razo died, and I buried him in the little cemetery at Ambatoumalaze and mourned him for a whole week. I can’t

bear to think of it even now, that he should be dead, while I——”

But Barnavaux never finished his sentence. Half a league away we heard the rattle of musketry : the Limal detachment was coming up and the Sakalaves were caught like rats in a trap. Moments such as these are among the most stirring and melancholy of human experience when waging war against the uncivilised. They have invariably caused me keen pleasure, mingled with a disagreeable sensation, a feeling, if I may confess to it, of remorse. For the sides are so unevenly balanced, and the enemy, vanquished by wit rather than by strength, becomes entirely demoralised and disperses here, there and everywhere. Yet, when all's said and done, this is the crucial moment ; what would happen if the meshes of the net so cunningly drawn around the enemy were to give way and the latter escape and mock you for your pains ? The decisive blow must be struck, and, in order to win the hazard and obtain the submission of an entire country, the living pawns in this game of chess must be laid low, never to rise again.

The gunshots became more frequent in the palm-woods. A bugle, evidently man-

ipulated by a Senegalese, rang out. The Senegalese have a way of sounding a bugle that makes you clench your teeth and the heart within you to leap. It rings with courage and savagery, with the ferocious joy of killing and the voluptuous resolve to do or die. It was very evident that Limal's Senegalese had already smelt blood, and the bugle was telling us that there were many dead. Over on our side, Oumar N'diaye kept his eyes on Barnavaux with the expression of a hound straining at his leash.

Then we heard the furious voice of the Sakalave chief calling his men cowards and eaters of grass, and hurling insults at us, our ancestors, our mothers and our wives. He had made up his mind that he could no longer stay where he was among the bushes and undergrowth, and decided to march in our direction in order to break the circle and be able the next day to begin the struggle over again in his own way, that is by single combat, or lying in ambush and rushing out upon us with loud cries and much waving of spears. I could see as plainly as possible his shock of hair, crowned with strings of shells, and his heavy brutal face with its projecting jaw.



THE SENGALESE HAVE A WAY OF SOUNDING A BUGLE WHICH MAKES YOU CLENCH
YOUR TEETH

“Hush!” whispered Barnavaux, “I’ve got him!”

He took careful aim and fired. The Sakalave crashed down, with his face to the ground.

“Now, forward,” added Barnavaux, “we mustn’t fire again, we might hit one of our own fellows.”

We ran down the slope like maniacs, bayonet in hand, but not one of the Sakalaves surrendered to us. All that remained to us were the dead and wounded. The rest of them escaped through the hole in the net with great leaps like wild cats, and then began running away so rapidly and easily that I felt as though I were looking on at some play, and that this graceful, heroic retreat was all settled upon beforehand, and was an indispensable part of the plot.

“We’ve got the chief at any rate,” said Barnavaux very proudly. “That’s the principal thing!”

The corpse lay on the grass. The bullet had been fired from some distance above, and had gone in through the top of the skull, coming out at the back of the neck. Flies had already settled upon the blood. Oumar

N'diaye drew out his *coupe-coupe*, and stole silently up to it.

"Now then, Oumar," said Barnavaux roughly, "are you going to cut *this* fellow's head off too? Is that the way for a French soldier to behave?"

Oumar put away his knife without a word, and I offered him a cigarette. Captain Limal's bugle sounded triumphantly quite close to us. Barnavaux was sitting on a rock smoking his pipe.

"By the way," I began, "you were saying just now that you had been made corporal. Where are your stripes?"

"I find the climate of large towns unhealthy," he replied calmly, blowing away the smoke so as to get a better view of my face. "Three months after the Ambatoumalaze affair, after I'd been sent back to Tananarivo, I was reduced in rank for misbehaviour. But that's another story."

RUY BLAS

“ **H**OW far away it is! Ah, *bon Dieu de bon Dieu*, what a way ! ”

“ Well, and what about it ? ” replied Barnavaux. “ Do you imagine that it’s going to get any cooler however many times you say the same thing ? Müller, my boy, you’re a fool ! It’s no good getting ideas into your head in a climate like this. And you’ll break your bedstead, I tell you. When a fellow is six foot of misery like yourself and two hundred pounds in weight he doesn’t do gymnastics on camp-bedsteads. Damaging the regimental furniture, destroying camp property in the enemy’s presence : death and degradation. Keep still, you idiot ! ”

The camp-bed, which had been hastily put together, and consisted of thin planks taken from a packing case, and a framework of unpolished ebony cut from the neighbouring woods, creaked under the weight of Müller, who, without replying, kicked out

with his bare foot at the wall of the hut. And as this wall was nothing more nor less than a thin lattice-work of banana leaves, woven on slender poles, as is the custom in the Betsimisarake district, his foot went right through, and a number of little splinters ran into it and held it like so many claws.

The soldier began to swear lustily. The hut door was open, and the moon outside shining with intolerable brilliance. The soil was rendering up all the heat it had absorbed during the day. It was sweating heat, a damp heat that reeked of crushed grass, fever, and mud.

Around a circular space, broken here and there by low dark huts which looked like blots in the moon's dazzling rays, three sacrificial stakes bore a curiously barbaric burden, which consisted of the horns and bleached skulls of oxen. These heads made one ponder the fancy that long ago, when sacrifices had been offered on this spot, the heads alone had remained after the bodies had long since crumbled away. The horns made fearful shadows upon the ground, and the dry, garish, electrical-looking moonlight gave an appearance of evil and mystery to the night.

Thus the moon held sole sway, shining upon the red, burning soil, alone, absolute, and all-pervading. The curious face of the "man in the moon" was mournful to look upon that night, with its mocking mouth and little slanting eyes. Ah, the gaze of those celestial orbs gave me the wish to break down and weep! They filled the sky and the earth with depression, discouragement, inexplicable ennui, shameful fear, and a loathing of everything. The little Malagasy children in the village called to one another as if for some great ceremony:

"Look! look! the moon is as bright as daylight!"

Then they began their song to the moon:

"O grandmother! We are sad, sad, sad.

So sad, so sad are thy little children!

Thy little children are about to die!"

This song is centuries and centuries old. It goes back to the days when these barbarians had even fewer words with which to express their thoughts than they have to-day; fewer words with which to express their terror at the infinite wonders of nature.

The shrill little voices kept up a continuous singing, and the last notes of the refrain

rang out sadly, and unchangingly, clear as crystal, like drops of water falling into a bowl :

“Do, ré, do, do !”

Müller pulled back his foot and went on :

“What a long way off ! *Bon Dieu de bon Dieu !* We shall never see home again !”

Little Rasoà, who was crouching on a mat at the feet of Barnavaux, her lord and master, stretched herself like a cat, and said softly :

“*Tesitra ve, Ianaho ?* Why are you angry ?”

Müller did not understand, but Barnavaux answered :

“He is not angry, little Rasoà, he is thinking of home.” Then turning abruptly to his comrade he said, “Müller, you’re a damned nuisance ! You are going to wake up the whole station and the adjutant will come along and soon settle your hash. Lights out has sounded, so for God’s sake leave us in peace. What have you been drinking ?”

“Rum,” answered Müller, “half-water, too ; it couldn’t have hurt a child.”

“Give him a little water, Rasoà,” said Barnavaux, in Malagasy, without deigning

to discuss the matter with him. "He's got fever and has been drinking rum."

Rasoa rose, took up the bamboo stem, about ten feet in length, in which the water in this country is preserved—it is a kind of pipe stopped up at one extremity—and very carefully held the open end over a tin mug placed upon the floor. It is no easy matter to fill a small cup from a bamboo rod as long as two men, and not to produce a sudden deluge. In order to be successful you must have learned the trick when you were a child. Rasoa knew all about the matter, and Barnavaux left it to her.

She crossed the hut, clad in nothing but her *lamba*, and in a few seconds was visible in the little square of moonlight that poured in through the open door, her youthful figure standing out plainly. She was inclined to be fat, and had the firm but over-developed breasts peculiar to the Malagasy girls at an age when their European sisters are still playing with their dolls.

"Drink," she said to Müller.

We heard the sound of metal falling on the stone floor. Müller had flung away the mug without drinking. Then he burst into sobs like some big child.

“’Pon my word, you must have taken leave of your senses!” cried Barnavaux, striking a match.

Müller’s face appeared, running with perspiration, and horribly convulsed, like that of a maniac. He had gone to bed in his pants and shirt, and his bare white chest, covered with thick fair hair like that of a Northerner, was heaving spasmodically.

“I’m sick of life,” he said confusedly, “I’m dead sick of life. If this country was a man, I’d kill him. And you can’t even call it a country. What I call a country is a place where there are people, villages, fields and work in the fields, all sorts of familiar things. Here there’s nothing, there’s no sort of civilisation, there’s no—no soul!”

“Nobody compelled you to join again,” returned Barnavaux calmly. “You had served your time in the infantry, and then you became a civilian, that’s down on your papers. Then you rejoined the Marine Infantry, and now you come like a six-foot baby wanting his mammy! You make me sick!”

The six-foot baby tried to grin. And that is a trick peculiarly typical of our race, who love purity and sentiment, and

yet mock at both. Tears were on Müller's eyelashes, and yet he grinned. I repeat it is a French habit. There are many among us—even among the lower classes—who spoil themselves by this particular form of lying, and yet every one of them, even the latter, know quite well that such an attitude is in the worst possible taste. But they cannot help themselves.

Müller stopped sneering, and muttered :

“I couldn't stay in France, I couldn't ! It was because of a woman. I enlisted in the same way that many men go into the priesthood, I wanted to be elsewhere, for I could not breathe at home. I wanted to be very far away, I wanted to live a hard life, be ordered what to do, to go on long marches. I wanted to think of myself, of my life, and when a fellow is risking his life, attacking, or defending himself, he's got to think of himself. So I re-enlisted, that's all ! And here we are in this blessed station with nothing to do from morning to night, and everything comes back to me, everything. I'm longing for home, for the colour of the sky over there, the smell of the ploughed earth in Saône-et-Loire, the smell of the Paris streets—and everything comes

back to me, everything ! I can't get away from my memories. It's all muddled in my head, I can't think clearly. It isn't only her that I regret, it's all the rest ; it's all a part of her in my mind, just like people's clothes seem part of them. And there are heaps of other things too, ambitions, yes, I may call them ambitions, the longing for the unattainable and impossible, a kind of mental luxury as it were. You can't understand, Barnavaux."

"No I can't," said Barnavaux thoughtfully.

"My people came from Alsace," went on Müller, "but after the war they came to Digoin and started work in the potteries there, so that they might not be obliged to become German. I was born at Digoin in '72. Work at the factory did not suit me. To this day I can see the great mills grinding the earth into a dirty, yellow-looking mud, which was afterwards pressed dry between strips of linen. I can see my little sisters with their fair rosy cheeks turning white from the fumes of the lead glaze. Ah, it was ghastly work ! I was a machine among machines, always doing the same thing, never thinking, and then having to obey



I ENLISTED IN THE SAME WAY THAT MEN GO INTO THE PRIESTHOOD. I WANTED
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uneducated working men, not in any way my superiors.

“I left and hired myself to a gardener. I lived by myself and much preferred it. The water used for the gardens was drawn up from the canal by a windmill, which looked like a great toy. In the morning the housewives came to buy flowers in pots, cut flowers, and greenery. A great many of them passed the gardens on their way to the cemetery, and they would go along in their black dresses, with their prayer-books in their hands, looking so modest and quiet. I liked them for their politeness and their gentleness, and also because they looked like the ladies in the books I used to read in the winter when work was slack. And yet they were only middle-class women!

“This went on until I had to go for my military service. I became orderly to my colonel, the Marquis Forbart d’Ecquevilly, who resigned his commission just when I had finished my time, so I went with him to Paris as valet.

“I shall never forget how happy I was! Don’t laugh, Barnavaux, you’d better not or I’ll smash you! I have no feeling of envy towards my superiors, and, on the

contrary, when I am able to be with them and serve them, it makes me feel I am nearer to them. Monsieur le marquis was a man who went regularly to church and was interested in music and political economy, not a soldier at all. Madame la marquise was a noble-looking woman, with married sons and daughters. Many people came to their house in the Rue de Varennes.

“When monsieur le marquis spoke to his wife, to his children, to his sons-in-law, or to me, he had a different manner of addressing each; and I used to feel very far removed from them and yet part of the family because I belonged to them. I very soon got to place people according to their titles, the antiquity of their family, their ideas and their position. I soon grew to understand such things just as they did, who looked upon themselves as a sort of living résumé of French history.

“They never raised their voices when speaking, giving you the impression that they had the deepest respect for their very breath, just as they respected their hands and their face and their body. The children never disputed the opinion of their father. When I come to think of it, it seems a curious

thing that a family like this, with its exalted position in the world, behaved in many ways like the peasants and bourgeois."

"What about the woman?" asked Barnavaux, whistling under his breath.

He was letting Müller run on for the sake of keeping him quiet, but was really extremely bored.

"I'll tell you in a minute. I said just now that they lived in the Rue de Varennes. I think the house had formerly been surrounded by a garden or a very large courtyard, but the d'Ecquevillys were far from rich, and flats had been built in the space. The same front entrance served for the people in the big house, and the people who lived in the flats, and the front door of the house was a little to the right of the entrance. At the back of the courtyard, opposite the study of Monsieur le marquis, were the offices of the Comité de Défense du Commerce français.

"This was quite a nice little society composed of people who did as little harm as good. The secretary, who wore an order, used to come two or three times a week for his letters, and go away again at the end of an hour or two. There was also a library

used by a few old gentlemen who were no more business men than I was ; and a good many pamphlets were printed by the society. But all the real work was done by a lady, who typed her replies to the letters, addressed the pamphlets, received the subscriptions, fixed the slips inside the library books and kept the papers in order.

“I could see her quite well through the windows. She was always in mourning, and did not look more than twenty-five. Her hair was fair and shining and lay upon her forehead, but her hands, the mere sight of which made one think of caresses, were bare of rings, and she did not wear a single jewel. Every morning at nine o'clock she would arrive punctually, and I would go down the steps to see her come along with her calm, quiet air, neither glad nor sad, like a person who does not care particularly about anything, and whose thoughts are with her work. ‘Good morning, madame,’ I would say. ‘Good morning,’ she would reply, and my heart would leap for joy.

“I can't remember when I first began to think of her in any other way than from the pleasure of seeing her pass by. I did not desire her, I have never desired her in a

purely physical way. I don't like talking about such things, but there's no lack of women, and I'm no fool! What drew me to her was that she had the air of a lady, her manners, her reserve, and also her profession—for writing is a very fine thing! I understand now why I felt as I did; it was because she seemed above me but not in any unsurmountable way. I never knew that I reasoned like this; such ideas came to me unconsciously like some disease.

“Then one day everything came out. Sometimes they used to play a very beautiful tune in the drawing-room when I was attending to my duties. It was called the *Danse hongroise*, and I know nothing in the world more beautiful. Whenever I heard it, I used to see a great marble staircase with shining balusters, and gentlemen on horseback ascending it out of sheer bravado, just for the sake of doing something strange and grand. The horses marked time with their feet as they went up, and their way of doing so was both rough and dangerous. The gentlemen were dressed like those in the family portraits, and their gold lace, their jewels and their diamond stars glittered and sparkled as they sat their horses with

upright carriage and shining eyes. Up they went, while the music beat upon the drums as the niggers do here, to encourage them in their enterprise. I've seen how that's done : it is the left hand, on the piano, that imitates the drums.

“Every time I heard that tune it made the blood flow more quickly in my veins, and my thoughts became so intense as to exhaust me. One evening, when they were playing it, the thought suddenly struck me that I must marry the lady. I had saved a good bit of money and need not go on being a servant, but Monsieur le marquis could make me steward of one of his estates, and she could give lessons and live like a lady, for should I not have become a gentleman ? I saw my future spread out before me like a map, and my heart was filled with joy. However, I kept my secret to myself for some time. A love secret is such a beautiful thing ! It is like a song. You can hear it above everything else.

“At last, one day, I saw the secretary of the society crossing the yard and made up my mind. I had long since decided to speak to him first, because he was the lady's employer.

“I went to him, with my eyes on the ground, but firmly resolved on what I had to do, and said, ‘Monsieur le secrétaire, can you spare me a few moments in your room? I should be glad to say a few words to you.’

“He looked at me and saw that I had something of serious importance to communicate. He opened a glass door that led into the yard, and I found myself in his office. Then he sat down, and asked with rather a surprised air, ‘What can I do for you, my boy?’ ‘I am thinking of getting married,’ I replied. ‘I have been thinking of it for three months.’

“He opened his eyes in astonishment and began to smile. He was an oldish man, with a kind face and a rather diffident manner. He looked a kind-hearted creature who would love to do others a good turn, but did not know how to lead them. And in order to do good one must first know how to influence people. ‘What can I do?’ he stammered. ‘I want to marry the lady who keeps the books, monsieur,’ I went on, for I was fairly started now. ‘There is no other woman to make a man so happy as she. I’ve never said anything to her

but good morning and good night, but I am quite sure that there is no other woman in the world to come up to her.'

"I would have gone on, but he cried out. Do you know, Barnavaux, I can hear his voice to this day. Ah, it's awful, I can still hear that voice! His mouth was set, he stuttered, and he waved about his hands. He did not try to pretend that he was not overcome with astonishment. 'You want—you want to marry the Princess d'Udine!' he shrieked, and I, growing cold all over, shrieked in my turn, 'What are you saying, monsieur, what?'"

"I had heard this family spoken of by the marquis: it was a family ennobled by the Emperor Napoleon, dating from the time when simple soldiers became princes, but by this time it was as great and as noble as the others. I had heard him speak of Prince d'Udine, who was a dangerous maniac. The secretary told me the rest of the story.

"The Prince had married a poor and pretty governess. Then he deserted her and she asked for a separation. Since that time she had lived alone and proudly worked for her living. She did not even wear her wedding ring and had resumed her maiden

name, but for all that she still remained a princess !

“And supposing she had been divorced, she would still have been a great lady. I had insulted her. I tell you, Barnavaux, I could think of nothing except that I had insulted her. I did not stop to think for a moment, I opened the door of the library where she was working, and saw her sitting near the window, calm and quiet with her pure, proud and rather obstinate air. Yes, yes, she looked like a princess, I could see it plainly now, and—without more ado, I stood straight and stiff like a well-trained servant and said to her, ‘I ask the pardon of Madame la princesse ?’

“She looked up and I saw the mistake I had made in speaking to her, for she could not know anything about it. But it had seemed to me as though the whole world knew it.

“I heard the secretary tell her of my madness and his indiscretion. First she blushed to the roots of her hair, and then she burst out laughing. Ah, it was an ugly laugh, ugly for her, for me, for humanity, for life, for everything ! It was a laugh that expressed all the disgust she felt for me, and her desperate anger as she realised that, in

future, there would only be people in my position to want her in good faith, to want her sufficiently to marry her. She laughed. Ah, God! Don't you think, Barnavaux, that, if I had strangled her at that moment, or knocked her down and kicked her, or dragged her along by her hair, it would have been letting her off easy?

"I rushed away and went up to my room on the sixth story. All day and all night I shrieked and howled like a madman. No one dared come near me. They could not sleep, but they did not complain, for they were afraid.

"Since I realised the impossibility of my longed-for happiness, I could the better taste in imagination the delights of it. It became a living thing. My hands touched it; my tears flowed with unimaginable, incomprehensible rapture at the vicious yet magnificent visions conjured up by my sick fancy, as though the little bare feet of the princess had walked over my body, to make me die of anguish and joy. And in my delirium I cried out, 'Make me suffer once again, madame, for pity's sake!' That night I was as mad as a man can well be.

“The next day, with giddy aching head, I went to beg the marquis to let me off without giving him my week’s notice. He agreed to everything without a word, without a sneer, without even appearing to pity me. He alone did not speak to me in a sarcastic voice. I could have killed the others !

“When two days later I returned for my things, he said thoughtfully, ‘You might have stayed. Madame la princess d’Udine insisted on going away herself. You will never see her again.’

“I had been the cause of her misfortune then—she had left because I had insulted her. I had taken her livelihood from her. What is she doing now, and where is she ? I used to think I could see her walking along the roads, or her shadow upon the pavements, and it was to avoid the pavements and the roads that I enlisted again.

“And what has been the good of that ? The other day the wind was blowing through the bamboo trees, you know, the big bamboo trees down the hill, and, as the young branches stirred they had a kind of blue sheen upon them. That was nothing, but it made me think of a look she gave me one day. Her eyes were never the same colour. The

memory of her is mingled with my longing for home, she and France are inseparable. I can't help thinking that if I ever get to Marseilles again, I shall see her coming towards me, sailing along on a white ship decorated with flags, and her dress will be green and yellow like the fields at home."

Müller's voice had grown tender, strangely calm and low. That far-off sorrow of his was lost in a glorious dream wherein was mingled a deep, sad pride, touched with a hint of fatuity.

"Barnavaux," he said, "you never loved a princess. Have any of the third battalion ever loved a princess, a real white princess?"

"Would you like a drink?" said Barnavaux patiently. "Have a drink, old chap, and then you will get to sleep."

Rasoa poured out some water for the second time. Müller took the mug and drank a long draught.

"It was all impossible, quite impossible, but if only I had been a—an adjutant!"

"Shut the door, little Rasoa," said Barnavaux. "He feels much more sad when he sees the moon."

Rasoa drew the door to, so that the light only shone through the crevices in the

banana trellis-work, making thousands of little blue diamonds sparkle on the walls of the poor hut. Far away on the plains an ox, awakened by the fear of an unknown danger, began to low. And then, nothing remained but the diamonds, the wonderful little diamonds, the pacified eyes of the magic moon. Müller dropped off to sleep.

BARNAVAUX, STATESMAN

IT was during the Exhibition of 1900 that I last had the honour of meeting Barnavaux, and it seems ages ago now !

Before entering the model of the Temple of Cambodia, one had to pass through a little courtyard which was supposed to be consecrated ground. This little yard had two entrances, one on the left and the other on the right, and sightseers had to go in by the one and out by the other, a thing which they did not fail to do. People always do as they are told on such occasions ; besides, there were two Annamite tirailleurs at the doors to see that the order was obeyed.

They had big black chignons rolled up beneath their *salako*, thin legs clad in dark blue stockings, slim ankles and tiny feet. They were neither black nor yellow, but had the muddy complexion noticeable among the vice-ridden youths and boys of our Paris workshops, with a touch of something more cunning, more effeminate and more

evil—something ambiguous, intelligent, and horrible. These fellows were lolling in chairs with their legs crossed, looking exactly like lady-cyclists.

Barnavaux, who was chewing the end of an unlighted cigarette, went up the steps to the door on the *right* hand. He held his shoulders erect like a good soldier and his close-fitting *marsovin* uniform was furbished up and shone like a new penny. But he had drunk an *apéritif* before déjeuner, a bottle of white wine during his meal, and two glasses of liqueur brandy after it. He felt pleased with life ; not drunk, mind you, but happy.

“To the left,” lisped the tirailleur, “to the left.”

He did not even rise from his chair. Barnavaux looked at him with the greatest astonishment, and from the height of his clear and indisputable sovereignty a sudden look of profound contempt spread over his features. He hesitated for a second, then with one swoop he lifted the tirailleur out of his chair, holding him by the collar and the back of his trousers. Seating himself in the vacant chair, he drew the little fellow on to his knee ; then with a gallant, caressing

mocking air, he imprinted a smacking kiss on either cheek.

The onlookers went mad with delight and amusement. The *tirailleur* screwed up his eyes and showed his teeth, which were stained with betel, his yellow face expressing the most bitter hatred. He said nothing, however. Barnavaux rose disdainfully, and crossed the courtyard followed by the universal esteem of all present.

I tapped him on the shoulder. He did not look surprised to see me, for we had met so often and so unexpectedly, when roaming the wide world, that nothing was more likely than our meeting in Paris.

“Did you see that beggar try to stop me from going in?” he demanded. “If he had been a Senegalese or a Haoussa, I shouldn’t have minded so much. But that caricature of a woman, that little black-guard dressed up like a *cantinière*, giving me orders, me, Barnavaux, in my uniform! It’s absurd! And everything here is absurd. Exhibitions are the ruin of the respect that should be shown the white man. These dirty savages ought never to leave their own country. They ought not even to know that our country in any way resembles

theirs, that it contains earth, rocks, and trees like their own, and white slaves whom they can have for twenty sous over there behind the Invalides.

“When there is a handful of us abroad, and we force them to obey, it is not because we have the latest things in guns or trains, but because we are intelligent, because we understand our officers and are ourselves as closely united as our bayonets when we pile arms; because we can guess their tactics, and they will never be able to guess ours. We are a mystery to them, they look upon us as living gods, and they imagine that we come from the sea, where we have a wonderful country that in no way resembles theirs. That is what is needed to master them.

“But instead of that, we let them come to France, and we let them see that the white men over here do work which nothing on earth would induce them to do out there. That’s where the trouble begins. We call that impressing them with our civilisation. We prove to them that there are poor men over here, white men who do the menial labour. We show them women who might be our wives and bear us children, and who



THE TIRAILLEUR SCREWED UP HIS EYES AND SHOWED HIS TEETH—BARNAVAUX
ROSE DISDAINFULLY

in their turn would be rulers out there—and these same women can be had for less than they pay their *congai* or their *moussou*. Do you think that is the right way to impress them? No, they despise us!

“I know how to speak to niggers and how to treat them. I *know*, I tell you, and you who are a writer know nothing at all about it. You must not teach them French, because when they know it they are allowed to have a vote, but they still remain niggers. It is necessary to treat them fairly and with justice, but when they do what is forbidden, you can beat them, kill them, cut off their hands, and they won’t complain. We do the complaining, however, and then say nothing when they are forced to work, a thing they hate much more than anything else. We ought to be more logical! There is only one conviction possible to us white men in Africa, and that is that we are the superiors, and we’ve got to make them believe it as firmly.

“On the right bank of the Senegal, there is a station called Kaedi. I spent six months there once. It is not a rich country, and the Moors from the adjoining desert come there freely. On the banks of the river a

colony of about one hundred prisoners, taken from the chief Samory, have settled, their freedom restored to them. They live from hand to mouth and during the dry season sow their millet in the Senegal mud. They keep goats, too ; but they are very poor. Kaedi is not a station where there is any fun going—for the white man or for the black.

“ The chief of these prisoners had a woman who waited on his wife, and she wasn’t bad-looking. I often used to go and see her pounding millet, and I talked to her in the dialect of the country. She would laugh at what I said, but had the greatest respect for me because I was a chief. She never really thought that I was in earnest or would stoop to her. I used to give her bits of glass and sometimes the end of a tin of preserved fruit.

“ The rules of the station were very strict ; and life there was the same as in a French garrison. We had to be in for roll-call at night, for the Moors are nasty neighbours. That is why we had no women, as we usually have in less dangerous districts, where most soldiers have a little home and family of their^{own}. Except for these freed prisoners,

the whole of the population of Kaedi was Moslem and we never saw the women. The prisoners, on the contrary, were heathens.

“I thought that Anyane, the chief’s servant, might as well help me to pass an idle moment; and, armed with a present, I went to see her and told her what I wanted.

“I know how to be polite when I like, but this was no time for mincing matters.

“She drew herself up so quickly that her firm breasts trembled. There was no one anywhere near us; we were as much alone at that hour as a man and woman can well be. There were no trees around Kaedi, and you could see a tremendous distance away, as far as the hills on the border of the desert which were the colour of bricks in a kiln. The heat was burning my feet, for I was standing in the blazing sun, and the sand was red-hot. I remember all that as well as anything.

“Anyane was trembling all over. I went up to her and touched her, but she pushed me away with a cry.

“And she looked so sad, so dreadfully sad. After her first surprise was over, she took up her pestle and began to grind the millet again without a word. ‘What is the

matter, Anyane ?' I asked. 'Don't you like me ?'

"I couldn't understand what she was driving at, and I felt an awful fool as I stood beside her. It made me furious !

"Do you know what was the matter ? You could not possibly guess. No one would ever think of such a thing—not even you who have seen more of life than most of the idiots walking about here. 'If I had a child,' she said, 'he would be a slave. Son of a white man, and a slave—and the chief's, not yours. Slave !'

"That was it. Do you understand ? The prisoners taken from Samory had been freed and put where they were. But they in their turn had arrived there with their own slaves who still remained captive, and these latter looked upon themselves as the property of those who had bought or taken them. We had done away with one slaveholder, Samory, but nearly all these people were firmly convinced that they were and always would remain slaves. In this village of 'freed men' which we had thought to found, there might have been about four or five who were not slaves. Anyane was a slave ; and, if she had had a child by me,

he would have been one also. She did not wish it because she could not imagine that such a thing could be my wish. She respected me.

“It was then I realised what a white man is, a real white man who carries a gun and fights for the niggers. He is a king. Anyane’s son would have been an aristocrat, with no right to make use of his title, and she could not bear the thought of that.

“Now, supposing she had come to Paris, what would she have thought? She would soon have put me in my right place: Private Barnavaux, a mere nobody in France, as you know. There are too many Barnavaux here, fellows like myself! No, we must not take the niggers out of their own country; we must not show them how we live at home, or there will be an end to our superiority and prestige. Civilians don’t understand these things,” he added.

A USELESS PRECAUTION

AS soon as I hear a big piece of news, a real piece of news that requires some thought, I immediately go and see the man who I know will be particularly interested in it. So as soon as I heard that the Belgian Government had forbidden the sale of the beverage called absinth—from two Greek words, signifying, as has been pointed out, “which cannot be drunk”—I went to see my friend Barnavaux.

Barnavaux was in Paris at the time, although, as every one knows ere this, he belongs to the noble corps of the Colonial Infantry and draws the extensive pay of a private. And he *knows* all about absinth, for he takes it four times a day when in good health. When he is unwell, he takes a little more to make him better.

You may think what you like of Barnavaux, but he is a man for whom I have a great affection. I ran up against him for the first time during the war in Madagascar. I

met him again in the Soudan, then in Crete, then at Pho-ban, which is beyond the country of the Chinese, upon the frontiers of Tonkin. You know, too, how well he understands life, and how full of tact he is. When alone with me, he talks as to an equal. When there are others present, he treats me as a superior. And when by himself, he has the greatest contempt for me when he thinks of the things of which I know nothing, and of which he is a past-master : stealing fowls or rice, building a hut out of bamboos, bricks, stones, or empty sardine tins, chumming with the Senegalese, who are the bravest soldiers in the world, and at the same time keeping the niggers in their place, making belly-bands for the saddle with the wicks of lamps, riding on horseback but much preferring a palanquin, directing provinces—all you have to do is to see that the taxes are paid, is his simple explanation of that duty—making soup, eating anything and everything ; drinking likewise, particularly absinth, as I have already told you.

I felt sure that the virtuous scheme of the Belgian Government would fill him with indignation, but I was mistaken. Barnavaux would only condescend to a cold scepticism.

“And do you really think it possible to keep people from drinking what they please ? That is an old woman’s notion. If the Belgians can’t get their absinth at the bars, they will drink it in the cellars. And if they cannot drink it in the cellars, it will be in the lofts. I once knew a commander——”

“Is this a story ? ” I interrupted.

“Yes. Do you care to hear it ? ”

“Yes, indeed ! ” I replied seriously.

And I dearly love Barnavaux’s stories : they are always so unexpected.

He began :

“I must first tell you that I filled in a little spare time in the Legion. I suppose you look like that because I have never told you so before, but I didn’t want to spring everything on you all at once : it’s so bad for friendship. When a man has been reduced, and they won’t let him into the Colonial Infantry, where do you want him to go ? To the Legion, of course. Therefore, I went into the Legion, for the sake of my honour and my chastity. Do you follow ? ”

“I follow,” I replied.

“That’s all right. Well, I was in the Foreign Legion, and a column of us had

been sent beyond Aïn-Sefra and Ben-Zireg, to the very middle of the Sahara, but I can't say where exactly. I only know it was a long way off, a very long way, but of course you know the country. I have heard that long, long ago, in the first days of creation, there was a sea there, and I for one believe it. At the same time it must have been a very chequered sea. It looks now like a lot of dried-up gulfs and bays, with very high black and white granite cliffs; these gulfs and bays are dented and chipped by a wind that sweeps up quantities of sharp-edged stones in much the same way as a furnace bellows blows up the bits of coal and cinder.

“Sometimes you come across outlines of strange animals engraved in the granite of the cliffs, animals that have long since ceased to be. The terrific heat makes cracks in the rocks, crinkles up the men's cigarette papers and makes the men themselves as lean as planks of wood. From time to time, but very rarely, you come across holes filled with black water, and oftener, but still very rarely, wells in a row along an underground stream. Then you water the camels and fill the leather bottles.

“It is a very difficult thing to drink out of a leather bottle when you are mounted on the back of a camel, and that camel on the march. And yet they go along as though they had slippers on their feet, so softly and gently you don’t hear a sound. But, once on them, they lead you a dance! The first thing you’ve got to learn is how to stick on, and as for drinking out of a leather bottle, when once the beggar begins to walk along, that’s another matter altogether. I have many times doused my head, hit myself violently with the neck of the bottle, poured water down my back, my face and my legs, but never yet succeeded in getting any down my throat, and I gave it up long ago as a bad job. Besides, the water is bad. They call it—I can’t remember the word.”

“Selenitic?”

“Yes, that’s it! And selenitic waters are only fit for human consumption when mixed with absinth,” continued Barnavaux with the utmost gravity, “that’s a medical verity. And it clearly demonstrates that soldiers have a perfectly legitimate and sacred right to drink absinth when on the march: the first glass weak, the second a little stronger,

the third and fourth for the pure pleasure of the thing, the rest out of sheer luxury. It was the least we could do, for we were all experts at the job. There was Delebecque, who, by the way was a Belgian; Malpighi, an Italian; and Atchoum, an Englishman, who got killed at Figuig later on."

At this point in the story, in spite of my desire not to interrupt, I permitted myself the remark that the latter's name was most extraordinary.

"He was an Englishman from Wales," replied Barnavaux, who seemed surprised at my remark. "And his name was just like a sneeze; it looked something like Lillywin when it was written, and so we had to call him Atchoum."

I made no further remark, and he went on:

"At last the Commander declared that the discipline was going to the dogs because of all the absinth drinking; he said that if the fellows liked to risk their lives or have their heads chopped off when they were a bit up the stick that was their business, even a good riddance of bad rubbish, but some of the camels were missing and that was a very different matter. Of course he may have been right. The camel is a

very difficult animal to look after. He is abstemious, but addicted to wandering in an aimless sort of way. That isn't altogether his fault. He will eat anything except onion and garlic, which give him the stomach-ache; and that, although an established fact, is a very curious one, seeing that he is a child of the South. Now, unfortunately, the clumps of grass in the desert are a good ten yards apart, and if you happen to let the camels out alone at night to feed, the next morning they are miles away.

"That is the reason why our chief decided to forbid absinth, not for our sakes but on accounts of our steeds. He sent for the *mercanti* who followed our column and said to him, 'How much more have you?' The *mercanti* did not stop to ask what he meant but answered, 'Six cases and a small barrel.' 'I will buy them from you,' said the pitiless man. 'Here is the money. Now go immediately and pour away the contents of the cases and barrel on the sand, and bring them back to me empty.'

"Some officers are heartless and this particular one only drank mineral waters."

"Vichy water?"

"No. Some other muck that tastes of ink."

“Pougues water ? ”

“That’s it. He died later of some internal disease brought on by this bad habit of his. But anyhow, for the moment, his orders were definite. Ah, that day was a veritable Sedan for the Colonial Infantry ! Delebecque actually wept, and Malpighi cherished dreams of murder. As for Atchoum, being a taciturn Englishman he didn’t say a word, but went off quietly. Five minutes later we even saw him helping the *mercanti* to carry the empty barrel and cases to the Commander. Horrible brute ! ‘Atchoum,’ I said to him, ‘if ever you get a bullet in your back, don’t ask whom it comes from !’

“He whispered something into my ear and began to roar with laughter, and I followed suit. Then all the fellows began to laugh until their sides ached ; no one in the column had ever laughed like it since the day of his first Communion. I’m not going to tell you why yet.

“We had to stay several days in this encampment. The next morning the Commander jeered at us, ‘Now you’ll behave yourselves, my fine fellows !’

“At ten o’clock his orderly brought in his

breakfast, opened a tin of sardines and fell on the top of it; he was as drunk as the proverbial lord. The Commander dealt with him, ate his sardines and left his tent.

"The first thing that greeted his eyes was Atchoum, expounding the views of the *Internationale* at the top of his voice. Think of it, an Englishman, a fellow who didn't even know what was meant by the Commune! Malpighi was stark naked, but had put on a turban for decency's sake. Delebecque was depressed but musical. He was singing *Van den Peereboom* and the *Marseillaise* to the tune of *A la Grace de Dieu*. This combination is called *Hymne des Pacifiques* in the Legion and the effect of it is simply cruel. The whole column was as drunk as it could be, and at ten o'clock in the morning! All the absinth had been thrown away! It was an unsolvable mystery.

"The Commander, however, didn't give in. He said, 'The goumiers arabes shall put the whole lot of you in irons!'

"The goumiers arabes were snoring in the sun. These poor Mussulmans were not accustomed to good things, and they were utterly overcome.

“The Commander gave a kick to the first one he came across. The Arab woke, struggled to his feet, stumbled, fell down again and moaned, ‘Ma commandant, ma commandant, the camels——’ ‘Well, what about them?’

‘Ma commandant, the camels also, they’re drunk!’

“He was quite right, the camels were drunk. Such a thing had never been heard of since the days of Mahomet, and never will be heard of again, never! The camel is a melancholy beast, and these camels were merry, madly and ridiculously merry. They were dancing on their heads, on their tails and on their humps. Then from time to time, one of them, apparently stricken with remorse, would kneel down on the sand, put its head between its feet as though it said, ‘Allah! what can be the matter with me?’

“That day the Commander nearly went off his head.”

“But what had happened?” I asked.

“Nothing much,” replied Barnavaux. “Atchoum and the *mercanti* had poured all the absinth into the well!”



THAT DAY THE COMMANDER NEARLY WENT OFF HIS HEAD

KIDI : A STORY OF THE CONGO

KIDI was a black from Loango, who invented a religion, made no converts, and died a martyr. Nobody knows that, however, except myself and a few friends.

Kidi used to be “boy” to a white on the banks of the Ogové River. He was a good white—some of them are, I assure you—and he was something of a dreamer. Instead of buying ivory and india-rubber like sensible people, he had planted coffee and coco-trees. Sometimes he would point to his coco-trees, and say to Kidi, “That makes chocolate!” But Kidi didn’t believe him. He knew quite well what chocolate was, a kind of brown stone which melts in boiling water, and Kidi was quite sure that trees did not bear stones for fruit.

Later on, however, such is man’s inconsistency, he believed in stranger things. It came about because the white man was married, legitimately married, and had

brought his wife with him to the Congo. I've already explained that he was a dreamer.

His wife was a thin little creature, fair and delicate, with beautiful but unhappy eyes, eyes that were unhappy because her face was drawn with fever and also because she was going to have a child. When this child was born, poor ignorant Kidi was full of astonishment. Like most Africans, he believed that the white people came fully grown out of the sea, and that it was from the sea they obtained their riches, and that was the reason why so many white people had eyes of the same colour as water, grey, or blue or green. Upon reflection, you will admit that this is a very reasonable supposition. Yet here was "madama" suddenly producing a little puling creature as like for all the world as any other human child, save that his body was pink and white. To Kidi it seemed most extraordinary. Sometimes white gods came out of the sea and mingled with the simple mortals who are black, and then they produced little half-castes, but this one was a real little white god. What happened later only strengthened Kidi in his conviction.

For they brought a missionary to baptise

the child. It was Father Mottu, of the order of Lazarus. He had long legs, a broad back, a long black coat, which was always dirty, and a long, black, unkempt beard. He would have gone from one end of Africa to the other without a sou in the interests of a religion which brought him nothing, and he could speak all the native dialects. He made the people believe he could speak these tongues by reason of the special favour of the Holy Ghost, which, after all, may be quite as likely an explanation as any other, since I, who have no special claim upon the Lord, have never been able to understand any of these patois.

All this happened towards the end of December, and when Father Mottu saw the *bambino*, so small and sweet, in the arms of his mother, who was dressed in a beautiful white gown, he exclaimed :

“What a pretty *crèche* for Christmas Day !”

And so they made forthwith a *crèche* by the banks of the river in the new *paillotte* or hut with a straw roof supported by four posts. The river sang its song amongst the rocks ; the water was white and blue like the robes of the Madonna, and the

bambino slept in a wooden cradle with his two fists tight shut and his mouth a little open.

“Madama” was the Madonna, and her husband St. Joseph, just as it should be. Behind them came the animals: two goats well washed, whose coats shone like silk, and a solemn-looking ox. They had not been able to find an ass, but the solemnity of the spectacle was further enhanced by the presence of another personage: this was Fritz, a young elephant which they were trying to tame. He looked on at the proceedings gravely, and swung his trunk from time to time as though he were censuring.

Then came the three magi. According to tradition, they were splendidly dressed. The first of them was a clerk at the Customs, the second Father Mottu himself, and as everybody knows that King Balthazar was a negro, the third was Kidi.

And Kidi was overcome with joy, and trembled with pride and emotion. On his head he wore a crown of bright copper. A sumptuous piece of red material draped his shoulders, and on his breast, which was covered with a rough leather waistcoat, were glass and amber beads, and all kinds of

dazzling gems and barbaric necklaces. He wore very full green trousers trimmed with gold stripes, and scarlet morocco boots. In his hands he held ears of wheat, ripe bananas and palms. Casting all these upon the ground, he prostrated himself with all his heart. He understood nothing, except that he had the honour and glory of sharing in a ceremony sacred to the white man, of being transformed into a king, and participating in great and solemn rites. His soul was filled with pride, enthusiasm and thanks. Nobody thought it worth while to explain to him that all he had seen was merely symbolic. Besides, can a right-thinking mind—the mind of a child, a poet, or a nigger—realise the difference between symbol and fact?

And what if the world were but a shadow of something real, a bad reflection, as from a broken mirror, and the real thing, the actual, unknown and far away, unutterably far away, beyond the great beyond? True, it was from no such profound motive that they omitted to undeceive Kidi; but the fact remains that they did not undeceive him.

He had been allowed to approach, con-

temple, adore and serve a god, a white god! He had been signalled out for this high and special mark of favour. That is all he could make of it, and from that day on, he held his head high. When Father Mottu left, he gave him a medallion and an image of the Holy Child and his Mother. He put the picture in a little skin bag, and hung the medallion round his neck, attributing to both supernatural power. He looked upon them as the outward sign of an engagement contracted by him; henceforward he was bound to the white race by the operation of some awful magic, as the Senegalese soldiers were bound by the decorations and mysterious amulets bestowed upon them by the Europeans, which brought misfortune on those unfaithful to the incomprehensible words engraved thereon, or written upon the recruiting papers. For primitive peoples believe that words cause things to be, and that by the very mention of the words "love" and "death" a sorcerer can bring "love" or "death" to pass.

Later on Kidi enlisted in the Tchad militia, and received one of those European decorations. He put it with the one Father

Mottu had given him, for in his eyes there was no difference between the two. The reason why Kidi enlisted was that his master and the poor little pale silent "madama" and the little white god had returned to France, or as Kidi would have put it, they had returned to their home in the sea, to the home of strange gods. Kidi had been very unhappy when they went, but not at all astonished; the white people often died in his country, which proved that they could no more live on land than real fishes, or else they returned from whence they came. None of them ever died of old age.

And so Kidi took part in the campaigns, and very bravely too. He assisted at great massacres without turning a hair, in fact, he joined in and "broke" a great many villages, that is to say, he did his share in the sacking of them. In this he was encouraged by his instincts, his traditions, and also by the exigencies of his own religion.

Thus his column arrived one day on the banks of the Oubangui in north-east Congo. The chief of the column was a white man, short, tough, tanned, generous, and brave. He ordered a great pole to be fixed upon

the river bank, hoisted the flag, and said to Kidi :

“That means that the country belongs to us. And when anyone comes here tell them what it means ; the rest of us must go on.”

That is the way things are done, you know. Millions are spent in forming the columns, and all that is done is to move on.

“If possible,” added the Commander, “every third month a ship will bring you your pay. If it does not come, no matter, stay here all the same.”

Kidi replied respectfully :

“Y a bon !”

By the flagstaff on the banks of the river he stayed alone. Each morning he hoisted the flag and lowered it at sunset, in accordance with his creed. He bought a wife soon after, for six bars of copper ; for a well-known Loango maxim says that he who has no wife is either mad or can't afford to buy one.

You must have noticed already that this story is full of nigger common sense. Kidi stuck a knife into the picture of the “madama” and the white child. He did not intend to hurt them, but he wished to

call their attention to the fact that a son had just been born to him, whom he desired them to preserve from smallpox. The promised victualling boat never came, but he did not care. Instead of it, came blacks from the Belgian frontier. One day they crossed the river and began to cut bindweed to gather india-rubber. Kidi went calmly up to them and said :

“ No good ! All French here. You damn well get out.”

But the blacks burst into fits of laughter. They were cannibals of the tribe of Bangalas, who cut the skin of their foreheads to form a kind of crest, which gives them a brutal appearance. Kidi looked at them with horror. They answered that there was no more india-rubber on their side of the river, and that the Belgians would be “ much bad ” if they did not take some back.

All that Kidi would say was :

“ You damn well get out ! ”

Then, seeing that he was all alone, the blacks began to laugh again. Kidi did not hesitate a second, because he thought far worse things than death would be his fate in the life beyond had he done so. He could not be disobedient to the white

man's fetish. Therefore, without stopping to consider anything so trifling as the fact that he was all alone, he simply remarked :

“ I will fight.”

He said it quite naturally, it did not seem at all strange to him, by reason of his religion. There are few people in the world as logical as Kidi.

He went for his gun and fired into the middle of the crowd, and he was so brave that for that day he was conqueror.

But the Bangalas came back quietly in the night and set his *paillotte* on fire. Then as Kidi, uttering loud cries, rushed out, a knife struck off his head at a single stroke. Having killed his wife, the Bangalas took his little son away with them. He was crying and his eyes were covered with flies.

Thus died Kidi, because one December day he had played at being the wise King Balthazar. And this story is a true one.

THE GOD

"Kamehameha said that, eighteen generations before him, white men came from the sea, bringing with them a god."

GULLS had been passing overhead since the previous evening, and the air smelt of vanilla, spices, green grasses, and fertility. When the sun set, mountains appeared, so high that even in this latitude their peaks were crowned with snow. The soundings indicated that the water was shallower, and when night came great fires were to be seen shining in the darkness. Land was very near, inhabited land. Full of high, unsullied pride, Félix-Hector de Beaussier-Larieuse gave the order to cast anchor.

The certainty of his discovery, the intoxication of the perfumes wafted over the waves, and even the noisier joy of the sailors laughing on the forecastle made his breath come quicker and his heart beat with gladness. Like Bougainville, he had dreamed

of discovering a new country, and of presenting it to his king. The enthusiasm of his young philosophical beliefs showed him the savages as brothers possessed of reason, as equals therefore—even superiors, as unspoiled children of nature—and he hoped at the end of his wanderings to find a people who knew the secret of true happiness.

The first islands they came to after having passed the capes of Patagonia were round and green, and lay very low in the water. In the centre of them were large circular lakes. These islands looked like great lotus flowers blooming on a boundless stretch of water. But they were uninhabited. The only creatures to be seen on their shores were numbers of sea-cows with their almost human faces, and the groves were peopled by birds only, who were not in the least alarmed at the sight of human beings, and let themselves be picked up like flowers. The sailors caught them and pulled the feathers out of their tails, but they did not fly away or even stir, not realising whence came the pain they felt.

At last, however, they seemed to have reached their journey's end. The islands they were approaching appeared much

larger, and were doubtless the country sought for. When dawn broke, a wondrous sight met their gaze. As far as the eye could see a beautiful archipelago spread over the waters, and thousands of canoes, thronged with natives, brandishing branches of banana leaves as a sign of friendship, were coming to meet them.

A number of women, who had been pushed away from the canoes, were swimming towards the ship. They looked as though they hung suspended in the water, which was so transparent that it seemed like a second atmosphere, hardly denser than the air they breathed. Their bodies were of a golden fairness, as fragile, light and smiling, they swam along. Sometimes they raised their bodies right out of the water, and the bright drops fell from their long hair upon their youthful breasts.

Félix-Hector, who was generous and kind-hearted, and, although addicted to learning and philosophy, could understand the natural passions of the human heart, allowed them to come on board. Crowned with flowers, they threw themselves at his feet. But the sailors, coming up, drew them away to the lower deck where, with flattered

complacency, they allowed themselves to be loved. When the sailors brought them mirrors, they signed to them that they preferred tin-tacks, and, as they were quite naked, they took these away in their mouths.

Other canoes were now quitting the shore. These were very big red boats carved at bow and stern. First came the boat of the kings. The latter, clad in red cloaks and mother-of-pearl helmets trimmed with feathers, and carrying shining flint knives in their belts, stood motionless, with grave, determined faces, and leaned upon long wooden staves.

The second boat was that of the gods. The gods themselves, made of woven willow stuffed with white and yellow horsehair, were of gigantic stature and swayed clumsily with the motion of the boat. Kneeling priests chanted hymns before them, and their whole appearance was formidable in the extreme.

“Lono ! Lono ! Lono !” cried the people.

The kings boarded the vessel of Félix-Hector and immediately fell prone upon their faces, and the gods, secretly moved thereto by the priests, saluted in grotesque and savage fashion. An ancient man, well-

nigh blind, formerly chief of the warriors and now high-priest, approached with lowered eyes, and, taking off his own cloak, necklaces, and amulets, placed them on the captain's shoulders; then, stark naked as he was, he remained there for a moment continuing his chant, and ended by prostrating himself suddenly upon the deck, where he lay for a moment as motionless as a corpse. After which they all rose simultaneously, and signed to Félix-Hector to enter the ship of the gods.

Through countless lines of motionless people lying prone upon their faces, he was conducted to the temple. This was built of large square blocks of stone and its flat roof was surrounded by a balustrade decorated with human skulls. The Temple was the Pantheon of the island. Twelve gods, with faces set in a fierce ironical grin, sat in a semicircle round the altar, and upon the altar itself lay slaughtered beasts, murdered male children, and also the fruits of the earth.

The high-priest placed Félix-Hector upon a carved stool amid the idols and threw a mantle of scarlet upon his shoulders, respectfully holding his right arm away from his

body, while a tall acolyte, with a long beard and a skin as white as a European's, held out his left arm. And Félix-Hector de Beaussier-Larieuse sat upright, upon the roof of the temple towering above the sea, the woods, and the hills, with arms outstretched, bewildered, before a worshipping people. Around him the flames from the pigs sacrificed in his honour mounted high into the air.

Looking down with dazzled eyes, he saw the high-priest upon his knees before him, holding in his hands something that looked exceeding old, and was eaten away by antiquity and oxydes. He looked more closely at it, and made it out to be the figure of a man sculptured in brass, with arms stretched out like his own, and feet resting on a kind of plate. The high-priest, having rubbed this plate with his finger, Félix-Hector read :

CHRISTUS VINCIT.

and in smaller letters :

Carolus Quintus.

Then he understood. Two centuries before him, the old warriors of Charles V., indefatigable as they were, had discovered

this island. They had filled their water-casks, cut down wood, and searched for gold. Finding none, they had wearied of the place, and disdainfully quitted it. However, according to their invariable custom, they had not marked its position on the maps, fearing lest some other nation should profit by their discovery, and send her own ships to lie in ambush there and fall upon the Spanish galleons.

But no doubt they had set up crosses while they were there, crosses long since crumbled to dust ; they had preached with fanatical zeal and without knowing anything of the language spoken by the islanders ; they had pointed to the sky ; they had spoken out of the mouths of their fire-arms, perhaps committed wholesale massacre. Then they had departed, sailing away on vessels that looked like winged whales, leaving behind them the memory of a white god who ruled the sky and was terrible and all-powerful ; and it was for this god the islanders had been waiting two centuries long.

Yes, this was the explanation of it all. Moreover, the people had confused this tradition with the story of a chief called

Lono, who in a fit of mad love and jealousy had killed his mistress, and then, overcome with despair at the act, had sailed away over the boundless ocean. But before going, he had said that the generations to come would witness his reappearance in the island of his birth, but deified, immortalised, and invincible.

The priests, however, knew better, their knowledge was more extensive. They had the sign, the brazen image, and their enthusiasm drew them as far as the brink of a certain psychology. They knew Pelé, the goddess of the underworld, Kena-Képa, who sends the rain, and Kaili, the war god. But they had forgotten the vast sky above their heads, the sky embracing all things and bathing the world in the clear light of day. Of course the new-comer was the God of the Heavens ! Everything went to prove it : his kingly appearance, his beauty, the pomp that surrounded him, and the tremendous size of his vessels. For the future their theogony was complete.

Faith was no longer necessary, for they saw with their own eyes : a god, a living god was among them, they could touch him, serve him, share in his triumphs, and

shelter themselves beneath his strength. Rapture stirred their souls, and they felt themselves transported by a holy joy.

Félix-Hector de la Beaussier-Larieuse rejoiced with a great joy also. They believed him to be a god. Well, as they had believed it, he would not disappoint them ; he would justify their faith in him, and would treat them with kindness and judgment. He would preach the laws of wisdom and humanity, would make of these people what he willed, teaching them to love justice, virtue and nature ; he would know how to gain their implicit obedience without laying upon them any restraint. And he congratulated himself upon having forbidden his men to make use of their fire-arms while in the island.

Suddenly there appeared before the temple twenty-four miserable-looking wretches with bruised bodies, chattering teeth and hands held before their eyes. These were immediately felled to the ground by as many executioners, who then proceeded to cut open the bodies with knives of jade. The priests took the four and twenty warm and throbbing hearts, and having smeared them over their foreheads, breasts, and cheeks, they

offered them as a sacrifice, for the gods, who are immortal, eternally happy, and incapable of feeling pain, must rejoice in the sufferings of man. They enable them the better to appreciate the benefits of their own impassibility.

Frozen with horror, Félix-Hector sprang forward and stumbled against the balustrade. The people heard him utter an exclamation of pain, and saw the blood flowing from him. And the high-priest cried :

“We have been deceived. He suffers pain ; he cries out and his blood is red ! He is not God !”

The people repeated after him :

“His blood is red ! He suffers ! He is not God ! He has violated the taboos !”

One man seized a huge stone and cast it at him, crushing his head. Another leaned down, and cutting off a bleeding and hideous piece of flesh struck the body with it. In a few moments not a vestige remained of the corpse : it was torn to pieces, crumbled to atoms, and cast to the four winds. Then the mob turned their attention to the crew, and most of them were killed.

But those who reached the ship avenged

their master. From the centre of the huge winged vessel the cannon thundered, felling the beautiful coco-nut palms like so much grass. The men were stricken down by hundreds, cut in half, decapitated, and dismembered.

And those who were not hurt rolled in terror upon the bloody shore.

Very old, and almost blind, the high-priest stood alone among them with head erect. Under the blast of the invisible death that cut down the men around him, he believed that they had in truth murdered the God of the Sky, and that it was his thunder that avenged him.

Angry, grief-stricken, indomitable, knowing himself to be vanquished, he accepted the unequal struggle. He sent for his bow and arrows, determined at any rate to die fighting, since, as priest, he had committed the unpardonable sin of sacrilege, and with trembling, old hands he aimed the arrows one by one at the sky.

The VENGEANCE of MRS. MURRAY

“ **M**RS. MURRAY! Mrs. Murray! Oh, my God, an awful thing has happened! The poor master!”

The oldest clerk in the bank of Murray and Co., Singapore, caught his breath in a sob, and drew his handkerchief across his burning face. His eyes looked as though they were starting out of his head, for he had been running along the hot road, weeping and cudgelling his brains at the same time as to how he could best announce the disaster—a disaster which had not yet reached its climax—and he had not yet hit upon the best method of doing so.

It was an intensely hot day, and he had run the whole way up the steep hill that led from the bank near the docks to his employer's house on the summit of the hill. At this hour the blazing sunlight seemed to have taken much of the blue from the sky. Beyond the native compounds, rich with fruit and vegetables, beyond the handsome houses

of the English residents, houses that exactly resembled those of their native England, except that they were smothered in the luxuriant creepers of the country and looked like European women dressed as Chinese for some fancy-dress ball, he saw the vast port crammed with men and things, with steamers and sailing vessels. Then farther still, he could dimly see, beyond the nearest of the Sunda Islands, more boats, more steamers, and more sailing vessels with their beautiful wings full spread, Chinese junks, Malay praos, vessels as numerous and varied as the human race, all meeting at this ocean crossway, where the waters of three worlds unite.

With a deathly-white face Mrs. Murray rose from her chair.

"Something has happened to my husband?"

The book she had been reading fell to the ground, and with a diffident, mechanical gesture the old clerk picked it up.

"Is he—is he dead?" she whispered.

"Yes," he answered.

After admitting so much, he still remained as troubled as before, because he had not told her all. She, for her part, in spite of her

great love for her husband, was surprised at suffering so little. At the moment, the word death conveyed nothing to her, and had she wept it would have been a mere contraction of the features. She did not at all realise that her husband was dead; her every memory of him showed him so full of life and activity. Then a terrible thought struck her.

"He did not commit suicide?" she asked.

"No," answered old Jim Stevens, "but he's been murdered. He was found near the open safe with a knife in his back. He had evidently opened the safe himself to put in the day's takings, as he had done ever since the cashier's illness. Now there's nothing left in the safe, they've taken everything."

"Who?" asked Mrs. Murray violently.
"Do you know?"

"Weldon, the chief correspondence clerk, and his friend, little Nathan, the cotton-broker. They did it. Nathan had come to the bank to see Weldon, and one of them must have held him while the other struck him." Then to get the whole story told, he added, "They've got away and haven't

been found yet. Most likely they've left Singapore by now."

While he spoke, Mrs. Murray was thinking: "I feel nothing, I don't feel the least sorrow. I cannot understand—"

She could only see Alfred Murray through the eyes of her memory in his own familiar guise, a big, quiet, silent man, and a born leader to whom she had devoted soul and mind and body, and with whom she had been entirely happy. She had to make an effort to picture him as he was now, lying on his face in the little inner office, with stiff motionless limbs and a large stain of blood upon his coat that spread to the floor. Even then, the strongest feeling of which she was conscious was anger mingled with a pressing need to do something, to act—somehow.

She could see the empty safe, and in her mind she lived over again the pain and fury of the robbed and murdered man. All his life he had been so active, so alive; he must have wanted to get up to pursue the murderers, and regain his own. All this came to her so suddenly, so clearly, and with such force, that she nearly exclaimed:

“He is in my brain, it is he who is urging me to act.”

There are moments when a person is moved by so strong an impulse that he cannot believe that he alone is responsible for it.

Five minutes later, carried in a palanquin by two coolies, who strained to the utmost the muscles of their slender, agile legs, she went down the hill-side with poor bewildered Jim Stevens trotting along behind.

When they reached the bank, they found it surrounded by a throng of people; the clerks were running aimlessly hither and thither, and the whole place was in confusion. The coroner was there, questioning one after the other, insisting upon all the details, important or otherwise, in an equally minute and careful fashion.

The dead man, almost forgotten, lay upon a bamboo chaise-longue, his face covered with a handkerchief. Clusters of flies had settled on the handkerchief, and that was the first detail to strike the young woman, and to make her understand that she was in the presence of death and final dissolution. She crouched by the corpse and began to sob, to the embarrassment

of those present, who one and all ceased speaking.

Suddenly she rose, and without exhibiting any confusion asked how much had been stolen. The question appeared so brutal that the hearers were horrified, and all the more so because they knew her indifferent to great riches and with little knowledge of the value of money.

She was told that they had not yet gone into the books, but the sum stolen might amount to three hundred thousand dollars in banknotes without counting bonds and securities which would probably double that sum. The murderers had in all probability booked their passage on one of the steamers going from Singapore to Yokohama, and thence to San Francisco ; and, so far, only one of that particular company's boats had left the port since the murder.

"We have telegraphed," said the coroner, "and shall demand their extradition."

Mrs. Murray shrugged her shoulders.

"I know nothing about all that," she said, "but I do know that Weldon and Nathan are Americans and that the United States do not give up their people. As for having them tried out there, you know as

well as I do that they have enough money to buy the juries. We must follow them, that is all."

The coroner leaped to his feet.

"Follow them! How? That's not our business. We communicate with the police of the other country and give them all the information in our power—at your expense, of course—but there our duty ends!"

"I'm not thinking of you," she said, "*I* am going to follow them. It is my husband whom they have robbed."

She felt that a chief had fallen in battle and must be replaced. She gave orders to Stevens to see that her husband was carried home in her litter, to watch over him, and, as she intended starting that night, to see to all the funeral preparations. Every one thought she had taken leave of her senses, but they let her have her way because her iron determination alarmed them, besides was it not mere waste of time bothering about other people's business? They also thought that she would not be able to leave Singapore, that the serious difficulties of her plan would put a stop to further action. She left them abruptly and without hesitation.

Along the quay, with their great funnels and slender sailless masts, lay the steamers mute and cold. Numbers of coolies were busy emptying coal into their dark interiors. One alone remained under steam. She was a long, thin, agile, clever-looking boat, her iron hulk painted a dazzling white. She carried a cargo of grapes and peaches, a very big cargo of fresh fruit which she was taking right into India. This was a new enterprise, the bold venture of a Yankee, and, as the perishable nature of the cargo made it absolutely necessary to lose no time on the voyage, the boat had been built for speed.

Mrs. Murray chartered her, bought up the cargo, which she sold for next to nothing in the Singapore market, and met her expenses by pledging her house and jewels and withdrawing her current account from the bank. At eight o'clock the same evening she set off, accompanied by two clerks who were to serve as witnesses, and armed with a copy of the coroner's official report. The people on the landing-stages looked curiously at her, for they believed her to be mad.

The Yankee captain had taken over the

direction of the pursuit and was full of enthusiasm.

“That’s a woman in a thousand, a real woman !” he said.

She was still clothed in the light garments which she had not had time to change, and, with no thought but the object in view, was learning details of the route. So she knew when they passed Saigon, and when they had doubled Manilla, and the throbbing of the screws which shook the ship re-echoed in her soul. The Yankee made them keep the fires roaring, skimmed through the shallows, took the shortest cuts, pointed out their position on the map, and marvelled at the power that kept her wide awake and apparently unconscious of fatigue. At last when nearing Formosa, they saw in the distance the smoke of a great steamer, and knew it to be the one they were pursuing.

The two witnesses, who until then had been very sea-sick and sorry for themselves, came up on deck with a rush. The crew were yelping like a pack of hounds, and the Yankee fairly danced with joy and talked of firing the little cannon which they had on the forepart of the vessel as a precaution against Chinese pirates. The *Sunbeam* was

speeding along at such a rate that she looked as though she were skimming over the water like a flying fish. The order was given for the siren to be sounded, and a prolonged bellow of alarm rang out, absolutely deafening on the wide flat surface of the sea. They overdid it, however, for the *Swan of Japan* thought a pirate was after her—she wasn't far wrong—and refused to heave to.

“Full speed ahead,” cried the Yankee. “We'll catch her up!”

And they did. Two hours later they got within twenty-five yards of her and the women passengers thinking they were about to be attacked, were screaming and crying. The captain climbed on the bridge with his megaphone.

“What do you mean by chasing a respectable ship? Be off with you or I'll send you to the bottom!”

With the help of his megaphone the Yankee commenced operations by clearly demonstrating that an American always prides himself upon having a more forcible and extensive vocabulary than any man of any other nationality. Moreover, he now found it extremely difficult to explain why

he had run down a "respectable ship," so he swore the more lustily.

"Pass me your megaphone," said Mrs. Murray. And she cried, "You won't send us to the bottom because our ship is a better one than yours. I am the widow of Alfred Murray, murdered by two of your passengers, Weldon and Nathan, who are travelling under assumed names. I have come to point them out, to arrest them, and get back my money too. Put out a boat!"

"You must be mad to begin with, and anyway it's nothing to do with me," said the captain. "Take your grievance to the United States or Japan if you like, and go to the devil!"

"Stop and put out a boat, I tell you," replied Mrs. Murray. "I promise to explain everything. If you won't do as I ask, I will follow you round the world. I've got a Hotchkiss here, not that I mean to sink you, but I intend to pick off anybody that remains on deck, beginning with you. Put out a boat!"

At this moment, Weldon and Nathan, deathly pale, attempted to go up on the bridge.

“There they are,” cried Mrs. Murray. “I recognise them. They are going to try and buy you. If they move a step, I’ll fire!”

The captain of the *Sunbeam* had already pressed the lever of his cannon and the first shot was fired into the air. The passengers believed that their last hour had come, and the captain, who thought the whole thing simply ridiculous, said :

“A boat will be put out ; but please remember that you will serve as hostages, that is all.”

As the boat came alongside the *Sunbeam* and Mrs. Murray and her two witnesses got in, Weldon remarked in a clear though trembling voice :

“Oh well, the game’s up and we must pay. Is that so, Nathan ? ”

“That is so ! Good-bye ! ”

Two revolver shots rang out and two bodies fell to the ground : they had blown out their brains.

“Hullo,” said the captain, “it was true then ? That alters matters, of course ! ”

And he looked with the greatest coolness at the two dying men whose limbs still twitched convulsively. In the meantime Mrs. Murray had come aboard.

"These gentlemen came with me," she said, designating her two companions.

"I've no need of them," said the captain. "Those beasts who are making a mess of my deck didn't blow out their brains for nothing. Send a steward here, somebody!"

The steward came reluctantly, for he was dying of fright. As he searched the baggage of the two "beasts," cold shivers ran down his spine. However, he found the entire sum of the stolen money, plus 15,000 dollars, the murderers' accumulated savings.

"You keep the lot, commodore," said the captain to Mrs. Murray, giving her in all seriousness the highest title of the American Merchant Service. "Keep the lot; it will just about cover your expenses." And, as she produced the coroner's official report, he added: "What do I want with that? People of our race must themselves see that justice is done them, especially in this part of the world. You were justified in what you did—but you look pale, will you have a glass of champagne?"

Her strength was, in truth, giving out; she had gained her end and now her energy and

courage were forsaking her. The champagne went to her head, so they carried her to the *Sunbeam*, amidst the cheers of the passengers, who, now completely reassured, cried: "Hurrah for the Commodoreess!"

She heard nothing, and during the return journey did nothing but weep. She felt that she had not done as she ought to have done. She ought to have stayed with her husband, to have been at his burial and have wept at his grave-side, in fact to have acted as any other woman would have done. But, more than all, the thought that she was not in mourning hurt her physically. The noise made by the revolver shots still buzzed in her head. She could see the two bodies, their limbs twitching in the blazing sunlight, their tortured faces frozen by death into an expression of anguish.

"It was I who did that, I," she said to herself again and again. "Is it possible that I can still be a woman?"

She suffered from the thought that henceforth she was for ever unsexed.

When they arrived at Singapore, the Yankee signalled and announced their victory to the surrounding vessels. He told them of Mrs. Murray's heroic deed, of the

cannon shot, the death of the two fugitives, in fact, the whole mad, improbable, splendid story. His enthusiasm grew with his own words; he searched for emphatic, exaggerated expressions, for the journalistic manner of relating the adventure, making it appear even greater than it was. He was full of astonishment as he reflected upon the great deed in which he had taken part; he was full of admiration for himself and for her, the dauntless woman who had been the prime mover in the drama.

“Listen,” he said, “listen. I am going to give you back the money you paid me; but, as I told you in the first place, you are a woman in a thousand. Now I’ve got another thing to tell you. I don’t know how the devil to explain—it’s the same sort of thing as with actresses, you know what I mean, men desire them, want them with all the strength of which they are capable. I beg you to marry me. If you wish, we will take possession of the sea, we will corner all the traffic from San Francisco to China; in ten years we shall be in a position to monopolise all the lines of shipping and not a puff of smoke will be seen on this great ocean without our permission. Or, if you

like, we will go over to the States, we will gamble with land, with gold, with anything and everything. We will create cities of which we shall be monarchs, for they will be ours from top to bottom and from end to end. No one will live there without our consent, there will be no buying and no selling except of things which we allow to be bought and sold. We will mould whole peoples according to our whim, and our will shall predominate.”

She answered nothing, and only trembled slightly with her face buried in her hands. When the *Sunbeam* sailed past the little island at the entrance to the harbour, thirty thousand voices greeted the ship, crying out their admiration, and innumerable boats, yachts and sampangs formed a cortège behind her.

All the ladies of the European colony were waiting for her at the Victoria Docks. They carried flowers in bouquets and sheaves, tumbling masses of brightly-coloured, sweet-scented flowers. It was an apotheosis, and Jason, returning victorious from his quest of the Golden Fleece, or the caravels of Columbus re-entering Cadiz laden with the spoil that bore witness to the extension of

the travelled globe, or Nelson approaching Naples where Lady Hamilton, his insatiable mistress, awaited him, had never been greeted as the widow of Alfred Murray was greeted that day.

A gangway was lowered from the ship's side to the landing-stage, and the watching crowd saw a dejected, humble-looking woman appear, with a face puckered with fear, whitened hair, and clothed in a ragged, cream-coloured, foulard dress, which latter fact seemed to be her sole preoccupation.

"For the love of God, give me a black dress," she said. "I cannot show myself like this, it is impossible!"

A rumour began to spread round the town.

"The poor creature went off mad," it said, "and she has returned an idiot!"

They were wrong. She was the same as she had always been, a good little English wife, obeying her husband, ministering to his physical needs, looking after his every comfort, and running his house in a fairly competent fashion. As far as the rest was concerned, she went to church, respected what she had been taught to respect and observed the laws of society.

And now her lord was dead, and she had acted contrarily to those very laws ; she had behaved in an exaggerated, unfeminine way, and she was very unhappy because she could no longer understand herself. Her only conscious feeling was despair at being incapable of bearing the heavy burden of notoriety. People fought to catch a glimpse of her ; they harnessed themselves to her carriage and dragged it along, in fact they looked upon her as a marvel. In all the voices that greeted her, in all the eyes that stared her out of countenance, she found again the voice and eyes of the Yankee captain. Every one believed her to be an exceptional woman with a tremendous will, and she felt weaker than she had ever felt before. All her slender stock of will had used itself up in one single act of violent determination.

Henceforth, people would only expect the impossible of her ; she had quitted the sheepfold and now no place was open to her. The only men anxious to marry her would be ambitious brutes like this sailor, whom, if she married, she would have to deceive, because all that remained to her was the weakened will of a child. Yet the

people were applauding with hand and voice, they were celebrating in her the glory and strength of her country. With all her heart, yes, indeed, with all her heart she longed to die.

She did not die. The merciful God to whom she prayed did not grant her this favour. When her affairs were gone into by her solicitors, the debts of the bank settled, the accounts liquidated, the business sold even to the name of the man for whom she had sacrificed her life, a very small sum of money was left for her, a very mean, insignificant little sum.

She left the beautiful sunny country, and returned to England to mourn in solitude, isolated from the rest of her sex. And it was thus that I made her acquaintance in a London boarding-house, a common third-rate pension inhabited by sad, middle-aged, good and stupid women. She was so like the others that no one would believe her story when it was related by one of the infrequent visitors that called upon her. She never spoke of the thing herself, for she loathed the memory of it.

Little wrinkles had formed round her eyes ; her nose was pale and pinched ; and,

saddest of all, was the fictitious youth of her fresh-tinted face, the thousand and one threads of blood on her cheeks. Her body was withered and her soul dead.

THE CHINAMEN

"The black smoke" . . .

Rudyard Kipling.

THE barbarians from the West brought them there and watched them toil and die, toiling and dying themselves the while.

I have heard it said that a corpse lies buried under every sleeper throughout the twelve miles of railroad along the Palaballa, up which the little engines now puff and jolt as though their wheels were held back by ghosts.

It proved death to the Belgians, death to the Italians, and above all to the blacks of the Lower Congo. The latter died in horrible fashion, like pigs, for they are a wretched race, drink-sodden and useless. The massacre had continued for three years, and yet the Via Dolorosa had made little progress.

Have you ever watched ants, each laden with a huge egg, climb one by one up the

branch of a tree ? They go along blindly as though glued to the bark ; and always at the same place, which, by the way, does not look more difficult to cross than the rest, something goes wrong. What is it ? not one knows, but each, as it reaches the spot, falls, and yet the others press on unceasingly.

In the early stages the Congo Railway was much like that. Men went under, and thousands were spent on the slope, still Europe sent more money and more men.

The Chief, who had planned this railway, had the genius that belongs to true conquerors, which consists in believing oneself victorious from the start ; and he had at his disposal the means wherewith to conquer and be the directing force of other wills.

He had cast them into the breach, Italians, Belgians, Congo blacks and niggers from St. Domingo, and now their bodies were nothing but rotting bones. So he had sent to China for more men. He knew that over there were four hundred millions of men, tight-packed and breathing poison upon one another. His idea had been that the southern Chinese, a hard, abstemious

beggar, accustomed to tropical heat, might well enrich the soil of Africa with his remains, and the supply was inexhaustible.

A tall, heavily-built man, who, in giving an order raised his arm as one would lift a weight, he came one day to inspect the work in the trenches. The engineer Guilmain said to him :

“These fellows are dying too !”

The Chinamen were working patiently, that is, those that were left : two hundred out of one thousand. They were like skeletons, and the bones of their chests stood out like the bones in a fowl's breast. You could see the bones plainly, for the men were naked to the waist and wore no trousers, only a scrap of blue cotton around their loins. With their yellow skin and broad faces, they looked, in spite of their leanness, like ripe abscesses. Their heads were lozenge-shaped, their ears pointed, their eyes like slits and their mouths were stretched in an eternal grimace like the mouth of an urchin on the point of tears. They bent over their picks, and their backbones looked as though they were about to break through the skin. But forward ! Asia must fertilise Africa for the benefit of Europe.

Guilmain looked at the Chief and saw a pool at his feet. Strong and powerful man of the North, he was literally melting in the sun. Throughout the long day he sweated as he went hither and thither, but neither his steps nor his will flagged. After all, he could die like the rest of them, he was only doing his share in the battle.

"The temperature is 150° in the trenches," said Guilmain. "The men can't stand it. A Chinee is a Chinee, when all's said and done, but he is a man, and human blood can't stand it!"

The Chief shrugged his shoulders. He looked at the peak of Palaballa, and the ridge a little lower down where the plans had fixed the railroad. There stood the barren doleful gate through which he had dreamed of pouring the fortunes of Central Africa: elephants' tusks, yellow and hard, balls of india-rubber, and all the other riches, that, since the disappearance of the great prehistoric lake, have accumulated in the huge paunch of the Congo.

The action of the sun and the atmosphere had softened the surface of the African rocks and the Chinamen hacked steadily away. Farther down, the rock had retained

its accustomed hardness and they had to blast. Three Chinamen had just finished digging out a slab as big as a paving stone, which he could have lifted with one hand. He grew desperate.

They had to reach the M'poso waterfalls ! His big, clear-thinking mind had conceived the scheme as a whole, and its final completion he took for granted. Yet, in his mind, he divided the scheme into sections, as it were, and methodically awaited the accomplishment of each in its turn. The gang of Chinamen had to reach the M'poso waterfalls even if it were the death of them.

In his imagination he could see the waters of the torrent, and himself plunging into them. The water roared noisily down, in colour a deep pure green that whitened where the bubbles were held prisoner in their downward rush.

In this strong man imagination played so important a part that it acted upon him physically. The mere thought of the waterfall refreshed him ; he immediately stopped perspiring, and felt cooler in mind and body.

Several workyards had been opened and the mountain attacked from all parts, like

a tree eaten away by insects. Every weak spot, every crack which could admit of the pick was utilised, and he was reassured by the sight of work everywhere. Now it was his turn to investigate, and tramp and work. At one point the road projected round the end of the cliff, clinging to the rock like a swallow's nest. Later the trains would rush past there, towering above the huge blocked-up river, which would not allow of the passage of boats.

"Let's go to Seven," he said to Guilmain.

"Seven" was the seventh kilometre where the projecting bit of railroad was just about to be commenced. On the steep slope of the cliff they were building a perpendicular wall, thus gaining a hand's breadth of space on every yard of ground. When finished, the erection of the wall would mean that room had been made for two railway lines.

"A Chinnee fell down there yesterday," remarked Guilmain. "He rolled to the bottom."

"Well," said the Chief, "did they find the body?"

"The other fellows went down," murmured the engineer, "and that is why——"

He finished the sentence in a lower voice, almost in a whisper.

The Chief started violently :

“They’ve not been taken away! They’ve not been taken away! Did I give that order? We had put our names to that promise. And so you hid their boxes under the cliff? A fine cemetery indeed! Now all the cargo-boats and all the barges you can lay hands on have got to be chartered, every blessed boat in Matadi, and they’ve got to be taken to Boma for the time being. We had given our word!”

“It’s difficult to get people to take them,” answered Guilmain. “It’s a nasty sort of cargo and the boats don’t care about it.”

A promise had been given to the Chinese that, in the event of their death, their bodies should be taken back to China. And the promise had not been fulfilled. The Chief had not known of this; he was a business man, who, born of peasant forbears, had served his time in the army and had become a moving force, which made itself felt the world over, and his creed forced upon him the respect of the plighted word. It’s one of the rules of the game. And then, no cheating, it brings bad luck: you can

coerce men if you like, but you must not cheat them. Under the torrent of measured and terrible abuse hurled at him in Swiss-French Guilmain cowered.

"If it should cost a hundred thousand francs, two hundred thousand, if we had to build barges on purpose, well, what's that to do with it? We had promised. We have spent twenty millions here and with this result, with this result! When one is bent on creating a giant, one doesn't haggle about his swaddling-clothes!"

His clumsy sentences lingered in the air with the sound of passing tumbrils. He went on:

"And if they knew."

"They went down to search for their comrade," returned Guilmain. "There are quite enough of them who know."

Yes, the Chinamen knew.

That same day Tchao-Ouang and Ah-Sing, who had gone down the gorge to lay out the fallen comrade, had seen under the cliff a long line of coffins. They recognised them, for they themselves had knocked them together, and had scratched upon the lids the invocation to keep off ancient spirits and also to protect themselves against the

spirit of the dead man which is newer, more cunning, and more bitter than the others.

Then above their heads they felt the flutter of the wings of the Tchong-Toué.

Formed of the winds and the waters, and composed of that which is absolutely incomprehensible and that which is half comprehensible, everything is Tchong-Toué and nature is full of spirits. At moments when we are not influenced by the tales of the ignorant traders, we catch a glimpse of China as seen by the enthusiastic eyes of Voltaire, who in turn received his impressions through the interested praises of the Jesuit fathers, but it still remains a mystery to us.

There are four hundred millions of animists, the aristocracy of which has turned to rationalism because of the philosophy of one Confucius, but is still animist at heart. That is what the books omit to tell us.

There are dragons under the earth who cause it to shake ; more in the sky who make the clouds ; others in the air who spread disease. The rivers, the mountains, the fields, the provinces, the houses, have theirs, in fact, everything in the world. Some of them are good, in which case the

Emperor gives them the name of mandarin, and they progress just in the same way as men. But it is better not. Every day their numbers increase, for from each dead body there falls a germ which remains for all time upon the earth, invisible, perpetual, and nearly always baleful.

It is probable that these floating germs resemble the body from which they come, which is nearly always diseased, or dying, and therefore they themselves must be peevish, irritable, clammy and corrupt. There is nothing more logical nor more terrifying than this Chinese superstition, and that is why Christianity is a great, holy, and precious religion. The souls of our dead are either in heaven or in hell, and well guarded. St. Peter has his keys and Satan his pitchfork, and they cannot get out. For over 1,900 years now our dead have been kept prisoners to our greater comfort. And indeed we protect them, we pray for them, we can go our way in peace, we Europeans. But the Chinese! They are in perpetual terror of their dead.

When the yellow gang at Palaballa learned that the coffins had been left under the cliff, they understood why misfortune dogged

their steps: the Tchong-Toué of the dead men, who had not been taken home to their own country and therefore were deprived of the offerings and polite attentions of their respective families, were revenging themselves upon the living. "Fever" said the doctors at the hospital—a great barracks of a place shaped like a long coffin—when man after man died. Words! Words! The truth was that the Tchong-Toué were returning for recruits, were returning to enrol their comrades. They came back stronger and more evil than ever, for they were being deprived of the meed of homage, the perfumes, the libations, the opium and the food, the imponderable food of these imponderable beings, who starved, yet could not die of hunger, and whose fury was terrible beyond words.

Tchao-Ouang was the chief of all that were still alive, and he decided that they must return to China.

There wasn't a boat going that would have taken them on board, but after much calculation they decided that they must have come in an easterly direction. The vessel that brought them over had always followed the sun, racing along as though

she wanted to reach him before he went down. Now, like all their fellow-countrymen, Tchao-Ouang and his companions firmly believed that China was in the very centre of the earth and that the sun came up every morning from the waters. They were quite ignorant of the meaning of distance, and the dark moving sea had concealed the rapidity with which their boat had travelled. They firmly believed that they could reach home on foot in three months. When the sun set that night, Ah-Sing threw his pick in the air towards it, and as it fell it formed a cross, indicating the direction of the north and south.

They had taken this precaution because they could not get away in broad daylight, and they knew nothing of the stars, a fact which by the way contributed no little to their anxiety.

Fortunately for their plans, the first few nights after their escape were light, and as they knew the moon proceeded in the same direction as the sun they followed her, after having stolen, from a shop, rice, other grain and dried fish. During the daytime they hid, tightly pressed one against the other, in holes under cover. They

started off again when night came, and as the Chief had concluded that they would embark from some port in the Portuguese territory, a search was instituted along the Atlantic coast, and they remained undiscovered. Several among them had the most horrible habits, and the close proximity in which the little band of men was forced to live made matters infinitely worse.

The first night of their escape Ah-Sing remarked :

“ Olga has followed us ! ”

Olga was the dog brought out from Europe by a doctor who had died like the others, from absinth, exhaustion and ennui—but the dying had been a more depressing business in his case, because he had been in a position to note its progress. Olga had naturally disliked seeing her master carried off, for she was a European ; but, after all, she was only a dog, and had never understood why the other white men had shut the doctor up in a box when he lay so still, and had afterwards put him in the earth.

She had mourned for him many days and in such a stupid manner as to force the living to think of death and that is why she got such a number of kicks from the white

men. So she came to the camp of the Chinese.

Olga was of a passionate nature, and when she desired a thing she desired it with the utmost emphasis. She cried to be let out, to be petted, to sleep, and especially to eat. The Chinamen thought that as she came from Europe she knew how to speak, but they could not understand her language. They loved her. She was the only female among them, and consequently had her moral value. The third night they killed her : she was from Europe, and they would have no Europeans with them.

They crossed the Inkissi, the Kouilou and other rivers, and the land between them was barren and hilly, covered with grasses, burned by the savage Ba-Kongos, and little stunted trees, seemingly on the point of death. Then they went downhill into a great grassy plain that looked like a rice-field. Farther away was a kind of lake with an island in the middle. It was the Stanley Pool, on the borders of which were Belgian and French settlers. Knowing that their town was situated north-east of the lake, Tchao-Ouang decided to go north.

And from now onward they went their way openly in broad daylight ; there was only a hundred of them left. When day broke and they saw the sun, they felt that China was very near to them, and full of hope they entered the forest.

And it was in the big forest that they died ; it is not worth relating how they died, it would take too long. But they died, that is all, as they journeyed towards the sun, and you will see that the only one to survive was Tchao-Ouang.

Many of them were eaten by the Bangalas, for these people are cannibals. They are a horrible-looking tribe ; the men make an incision in their foreheads from their nose to the top of their skull and they rub poison into the incision, making the skin swell, and giving it the appearance of a cock's comb. And, indeed, they look exactly like black and evil birds.

As I have said, they are man-eaters. Well, Chinamen are not exactly men, are they ? No human being, even a nigger, looks upon a Chinaman as a man, that would be too ridiculous ! However, it was meat and the Bangalas had a good feed.

The forest devoured the remainder of

them. It was huge and empty. For five whole days they walked on, never seeing the light of day except when the river made a break in the enormous expanse of sodden and decaying vegetation. They made wonderfully ingenious rafts with bindweed cables and crossed the water on them. One day they killed some natives, in order to steal their canoes, and for several days they sailed along the Congo.

The air was full of a perpetual foam-like mist. Each morning, when they looked for the sun, they could only see it through a fog, and regularly at midday a heavy rain fell. There were tornadoes, too, that rooted up trees and raised huge waves upon the surface of the water ; and at such times they thought that the end of the world had come. The Congo was so broad that from its centre, when there were no islands along its course, not a vestige of land could be seen. Besides, there was danger in the shape of Belgian steamboats, the islands muddled and sent them astray, the many curious currents formed a constant ebb and flow like an ocean tide.

They therefore left the treacherous river, preferring to follow the course of an arroyo.

Here they fell into the fishing nets placed there by the Bangalas. That day the Bangalas had meat in plenty.

Those who were left—ten in all—took to the woods again, avoiding the villages, and these are scarce except on the banks of rivers. Nothing can live in that forest. The high trees kill the small plants and the animals find nothing to eat. You can hear the birds sing and the monkeys chatter, but you cannot see them; on the ground there are insects, snakes, and vermin. The Chinamen picked them up for food, and sometimes the smell made them horribly sick. On some days, however, the air would be as sweet as the perfume of some favourite room.

It was not the flowers that smelled so good but the mushrooms. The first mouthfuls they tasted, however, made them violently sick. Fortunately under the rotting tree trunks they found enormous worms that were not poisonous, and in the same spot Ah-Sing saw a horrible looking creature stir in the mud. It was ball-shaped, with a thorny fin across its back and wonderful eyes of living gold! It was covered with a sticky substance that

attracted all the mud and refuse around it. Ah-Sing scratched its back with a stick; the two sides of the gross mass heaved and sank convulsively; then feeling the sting of a blow, it endeavoured to get away. It was a toad.

A toad as big as a man's head. The yellow warts that covered it from belly to backbone looked like rotting flowers on a dungheap and the spine of its back a bramble. It slobbered venom, and taking refuge once more beneath the rot and refuse it sent forth a long clear cry, the cry of the male toad calling to the female.

Ah-Sing, who was starving, thought he could eat the creature! But he was afraid of it, and as he looked about for a long pointed stick, with which to kill it at a safe distance, Tchao-Ouang cried:

"Do not kill him! he is so old! It is the God of the Forest!"

The toad's enormous bulk made them think he had lived for centuries, and, they argued, if he had lived so long he must know everything. He had power over all the decaying matter that surrounded them, for had he not survived it all? Wisdom, they said, is to be found in the old and in those

who live long in God's sight. Such an idea as this, though it would never have been shared by the barbarians of Europe, was not without a certain truth. At any rate the Beast was of ancient race, descended from the great cumbersome reptiles that reigned alone upon the earth in the days when, as is still the case in tropical regions, it was but warm mud and water under the eternal skies, sandwiched between the burning lava beneath it and the blazing sun above.

"Do not kill him ! He is the God of the Forest !"

And indeed the toad seemed the living incarnation of the forest itself. He was of a dirty yellow-green colour, humid, shapeless, unkempt, and sensitive ; he was full of horrible sap and his eyes held a boundless wisdom, his sad and beautiful eyes of living gold. How could he fearlessly remain in such a place if he were not a god ?

The toad's limbs twitched, as he kept up his plaintive cry. No doubt the marshy horror of the place was favourable to the continuation of his kind, for there were numbers of females around hidden from the eye as they crouched upon the newly-laid

eggs now awaiting their hour of maturity. From behind the towering trees, and those that had fallen and formed great wall-like barriers across the way, they gave their answering call. The mushrooms still gave forth their sweet scent.

Prostrating themselves upon their faces, the Chinamen cried :

“ Do not slay us, Monsieur-Dieu-Crapaud ! Protect us ! We will give you to eat ; we know that you are powerful. Come with us ! ”

They brought worms and flies to him, and Tchao-Ouang made a basket and filled it with rags upon which he placed the Beast.

And the toad went with them ; and he sang every morning and every night.

Depression, however, became more rife beneath the tall trees.

The Chinamen followed the course of smooth and silent rivers, of which the sight alone filled them with indescribable horror. The water was black under the black trees which oozed a never-ending dampness, and on the banks there was an impenetrable undergrowth composed of gigantic bindweed, twisted like the roots of a tree, para-

sitical orchids, with evil-looking flowers, vanilla-trees, and snakes in abundance. The sun! The sun! how could they walk towards it when they never saw it? The day was made of mists and the night of so heavy a darkness that they could almost feel it brush against their faces like the wings of a bat.

Then a great herd of elephants passed over the Celestials without even seeing them, just as men pass over ants. The creatures had gone down to the river to bathe, and, on emerging, they crashed merrily through the high river plants, towering above them. Their huge feet sank deep in the ground, and they tore up the juicy reeds, bigger than a man's thigh and munched them as they stood there, fanning themselves so vigorously with their enormous ears that the current of air stirred the leaves around them. The older elephants had tusks much longer than a man's body, and all cracked on the surface as though the mud had done its best to destroy even the imperishable ivory.

One of the Chinamen was crushed to death. But when the elephants had gone away, his comrades saw that they had made a great avenue through the thicket leading down

to the edge of the dark water. And they saw the sun. The black leaves had turned the most brilliant and delightful green. Shell-fish, looking like huge slugs, climbed the trees and sucked the sap that trickled from the cracks, and a bright blue bird flew high above them. Tchao-Ouang could at last point out the East.

Shortly after some poisoned prickles got into their feet, causing them the most intolerable agony. Gangrene set in, and their suffering was so great that several committed suicide. Then, arrows began to fly around them, arrows as fine as needles, but charged with deadly poison. When one of these arrows had done its work, a light shadowy shape, like that of a child, could be seen running noiselessly through the trees. The pigmies of the forest were defending their country. Although they were not cannibals they killed with the greatest ferocity, long and cruel experience having taught them to fear other men.

Ah-Sing and Tchao-Ouang would have shared the fate of the others, had it not been for a singular adventure that befell them.

They had hidden in a thick tangle of under-

growth, and were afraid to come out of it. To begin with they ate shell-fish, leaves and a kind of small leech, which they first crushed before devouring.

But after a few days they felt so weak that they thought they were going to die. Lying down, they covered one another with twigs to hide their bodies from the Tchong-Toué, and fell asleep.

A soft touch awakened them, and looking up they saw bending over them one of the pigmy women.

She was quite naked, and not black but the colour of yellow wax. Her face was lozenge-shaped with a sloping cranium. She had small breasts and a big stomach. Looking at them seriously, with no cruelty in her glance, she pointed to the toad. Tchao-Ouang prostrated himself before the Beast as a sign that it was a God, and the pigmy woman also bowed herself before the majesty of the fetish.

The Chinamen made signs that they were hungry; with the help of a tiny little bow, she killed them a monkey; but having restored them to life she did not leave them, she followed them. When however Ah-Sing and Tchao-Ouang tried to seize her,

she looked wonderingly at them, slipped from their hands and left them for a while.

Later on they managed to make out by her signs and the few words they learned of her language that among the pigmies the two sexes live apart for the greater portion of the year, only coming together at certain seasons as is the case with the great herds of deer. This season among the pigmies coincides with the breeding season among game, which is always more abundant and easier to obtain at such times. It is easier to kill and there is more to eat. When hunger is satisfied daily and the blood flows more freely in the veins, the desire to reproduce is awakened, and at night, during the dances around the blazing fires, the sexes meet and mingle.

Mavé was a virgin and ripe for love. She knew that the love-season was close at hand and that when it came she would welcome it instead of running away. During this great season, no woman can, and in consequence no woman does resist it.

At every other time they must flee man, bite and kill him, for love would be joyless then; this is what their instinct teaches them. Sometimes, however, a vague need

of "mothering" a man will urge maidens and old women with no children to help and care for the wounded and starving. Mavé had obeyed this instinct, but she was also conscious of the approach of the great season.

She was a curious creature, as agile and timid as a squirrel. It was the awkwardness and weakness of the two Chinamen that reassured her; but, as soon as they uttered a word in their own language, she gave a bound and disappeared for hours together. The strange words terrified her more than any attempt on her body. She climbed the trees, not like an ordinary human being with her arms around the trunk, but by planting her feet and the palms of her hands upon it and going up on all fours.

They never succeeded in making her laugh; for the pigmies, who are more animal than human, do not know the meaning of laughter. She was attentive and serious, almost sad, and sometimes strangely caressing in her ways. The Chinamen used to amuse themselves by stroking her chest and back, just as one strokes a cat. She would turn and twist with the pleasure of it, and her lips would curl and expose her

teeth and gums. This capacity for enjoyment is a special gift of nature to beings in whom love is impossible except during the brief mating season ; their whole body from top to toe responds to caresses.

As far as the Chinamen were concerned, the aspect of the forest was changed. Mavé knew its ins and outs as an ant knows the grasses of a field, and she did not fear it. The march became easy to the two haggard men and the little living statuette that ran by their side ; the very woods seemed to laugh. At night they bowed and prostrated themselves before the God, still carried in his basket by Tchao-Ouang. The monster slept continually, and when he waked for a few minutes to eat flies his golden eyes shone gently and he whistled softly.

Ah-Sing and Tchao-Ouang noticed that the woman pigmy's eyes slanted towards the temples as did the eyes of the women of their country, and the fact made their affection for her increase. But as they both abstained from her they felt no jealousy, and life was so sweet to them that sometimes they believed themselves to be smoking opium.

One day they reached the end of the tall

trees and came to a kind of plain, the first they had seen since Stanley Pool. It was covered with palms and cotton trees. The only inhabitants seemed to be the many-coloured humming-birds, which rapidly fluttered their tiny wings to keep themselves suspended and stationary in the air. They dipped their curved and supple beaks into the purple white and pink flower-cups, and drank the honey-sweet water that they contained. In the topmost branches of the trees, huge red spiders had spun their webs, so far away that the threads were invisible, and the spiders looked like stars hanging midway between earth and heaven.

Mavé gave a cry of admiration, and came to the side of Ah-Sing, taking his hand with a new expression upon her face, an expression that for the first time betokened confidence and submission. She had begun to think of the great season. Tchao-Ouang grew very sombre and insisted on pressing onwards. In two days' time they had crossed the plain and regained the shelter of the giant trees.

They halted that night on the edge of a swamp beneath ebony trees whose trunks were smothered in white lichen. A thick

wet moss covered the ground, and soon they were all three asleep beside the dying fire.

In the middle of the night Tchao-Ouang awoke. The branches were vibrating to a sound he had already heard, the call of the female toads seated upon their eggs; and in truth there must have been some hundreds of them calling.

This night was not the same as other nights, even for Tchao-Ouang. He had eaten, his terrors had fled, and his body was full of strength. At his side was the Toad-God with swelling lungs and throat, calling out his two unequal notes, passionate and solemn, like the cry forced by some terrible pain that might yet turn to joy. He scrambled up the side of the basket, and let himself fall upon the ground, whence he crawled towards the swamp where the voices of his kind were calling him. Tchao-Ouang stretched out his hand to the moss where Mavé was sleeping.

She was not there. Ah-Sing had disappeared too. Tchao-Ouang understood—the great season had come.

“Ah-Sing!” he cried, “Ah-Sing!”

No answer came, but an arrow whistled

past his ear. It was Mavé. She wished to kill him then, for she had chosen her mate, and, because she had chosen, she thought there would be a fight.

"Ah-Sing," he cried once more, "kill her, and come with me, come with me!"

"Leave us!" was Ah-Sing's reply.

He added some terrible curses because for the time being he was mad. Then he started to run far away, away towards the setting sun.

Thus it was that the forest, which had not succeeded in killing him, took possession of Ah-Sing. And it kept him for ever. For many days Tchao-Ouang searched for him, searched that he might kill him.

It takes a great deal to move a Chinaman, but Tchao-Ouang wept bitterly.

After wandering for many days, however, he at last gained the edge of the terrible forest.

He could hardly believe his eyes when he looked upon open space. Gently sloping hills spread before him, covered with grass so level, fine, and close-cropped that it looked and felt like a carpet to his hand. Herds of buffalo, giraffe, and antelope were peacefully grazing, and in the air floated gigantic

vultures, showing him how boundless were the heavens, and how blue. Behind him, the forest arose like a cliff.

Tchao-Ouang began to shriek with laughter ; then he took the toad and placed it upon the ground.

“Here is the Land of Grass,” he said. “You are God of the Forest. Here your power is of no avail—and I hate the forest !”

So he took a huge stone, the heaviest he could find, and let it fall upon the Beast, which burst like a water-skin, scattering blood, venom, and filth upon the radiant, treeless earth.

Thus Tchao-Ouang revenged himself upon the forest.

He was succoured by blacks from Zanzibar, Mahommedans and slaves, not out of pity but because he was a living curiosity. He still had his pig-tail, but it had come unplaited, and, as the rest of his head was unshaven, his whole body was enveloped in a tangled mane full of earth, vermin, and bits of wood. He was naked, and thus revealed the decay of his worn-out body. His legs were covered with tumours and ulcers, and his two big toes had been eaten away by the filthy rags that bound his feet.

But the strangest thing about him was his beard, which had grown straight, long and scanty, a few hairs on the right and a few on the left, in thin tufts that looked like bamboo clumps. He was crazy, too, and raved of many things, and this they did not realise because they could not understand his tongue.

Later, one of them said a few words to him in pidgin-English and T'chao-Ouang answered in a bad imitation of the same, which his questioner had the greatest difficulty in understanding.

However, as he was anxious to appear as though he quite took in all the Chinaman was saying, he made up what he could not grasp, and told his companions that the madman with the dirty hair had come from the forest, and that he had been pursued by reptiles with human faces who shot at him with bows and arrows. That was his version of T'chao-Ouang's story, and the others were in no way surprised. They merely inquired whether the madman with the dirty hair remembered having seen men with dogs' faces, and the king of the dark lake who was a serpent, and who lived in a magnificent stone hut on a round island,

and was served by a number of women all of whom were madly enamoured of him. The great forest, like night and death, was unexplored, and therefore full of wonders.

Tchao-Ouang asked them whither they were going, and when they told him to Zanzibar he did not understand; but the caravan was travelling towards the East, and that was enough for him. Out of charity they gave him scraps of food, and he hobbled along by the side of the slaves, the most fortunate of whom were sold to kind and just men, Arabs from Yeme. The others were to be picked up by European cruisers, and although supposed to be free-men and not slaves, were condemned to perish in the German and English plantations, under the false title of volunteers.

The days went by, and at last Tchao-Ouang saw at his very feet a boundless expanse of water. It was the Indian Ocean. The little, short waves splashed on the beach, and hundreds of crabs ran along the sands; as far as the eye could see the water bore the reflection of the sky as though it had been a mirror.

Native boats came and carried away the

slaves, while another vessel took Tchao-Ouang to Zanzibar.

The first human beings he met were Parsees celebrating a marriage. Night was drawing in, and the newly-wedded pair were proceeding to their abode surrounded by people carrying candles and torches, the divine symbol of that beneficent principle of the universe—eternal light. Crowned with flowers, they sang as they went their way.

“This must be India,” thought the Chinaman. “I have not gone so very much out of my way, and must be near the Middle Kingdom.”

But he speedily met with more blacks, hundreds and thousands of them. There were negroes from Mozambique, who smelt of salt fish, tall Zulus of warlike appearance, Souahelis from the Comores, Somalis with their calfless legs, black Jews from Abyssinia, every description of half-breed produced by the blending of every race under the sun, and last of all, Europeans: Portuguese, English, German, French, and Belgian. They were as thick here as on the other side of Africa. Tchao-Ouang had gone all the tremendous distance, had

suffered every hardship, only to find them again, and to find them the same—the same in dress, want of understanding, insolence, and brutality. He had gone from one ocean to another, and still he had not yet reached his country.

His brain was in confusion, and his will no longer directed him onward. Feeling more lost than he had done in the forest of eternal rains, but with no thought of taking his own life, he wandered about like a stray beast seeking a corner to lie down and sleep.

The streets were noisier at night than they had been in the morning when he landed. The white men who stop at Zanzibar on their way to the mines of the Transvaal or Madagascar, or who are going out to work on the new railroads of Uganda, or in German business houses are all afraid to die. Generally they are wretched beings or dare-devils, miserable, criminal, or ambitious men; not philosophers, or priests, or men of learning. They start off without the least knowledge of the land to which they are going, nor do they realise either how far, or how different it is from their own. And when they get to Zanzibar they feel they

must get drunk and make merry with the women. It isn't because they are viciously inclined, I'll swear. Indeed, many of them would give anything to be able to fling themselves down and weep. But when they are drunk, they forget what they see before them and live over again in memory the familiar scenes of their past life, which they relate with gusto to the other drunkards around them. That is what they call making acquaintance ; and they go to the women like little children, because they are frightened.

No doubt that is why there are so many women at Zanzibar, women to suit all tastes : Negresses, Frenchwomen, Englishwomen, Wallachians and even Japanese.

The Japanese women live near the German Consulate, not far from the road where the ivory-sellers live. And thus, as Tchao-Ouang wandered aimlessly along that road, he was startled at hearing some one talking pidgin-English, which is the *sabir* of the Far East ; and to his joy he understood.

And then he begged for alms in the hopeless whine of the Shanghai beggars.

Mademoiselle Chair-de-Baiser, who was piloting an extremely intoxicated English

midshipman across a veranda full of snares—cases of champagne strewn upon the floor, little tables, and easy chairs—pricked up her ears at the sound of his voice, which sounded like music in her ears, reminding her of a country she had known well. Being a kind-hearted girl, she called Tchao-Ouang to her and placed before him some little dried fish and a platter filled with rice.

When he had eaten she asked him his story.

The air reeked of stale whisky and champagne, of paint and powder and cheap perfume. But there was also the scent of the pepper-plants which came blowing in from the fields. The moon, a beautiful bright moon, whose light filled the sky, was travelling slowly towards the west.

Tchao-Ouang told her everything: all that had happened to him and all that he had suffered. And Chair-de-Baiser, whose soul had not lost its childishness, was wonder-stricken, for the tale was a great and marvellous one.

When he had finished, Tchao-Ouang said:

“You are almost of my race. Your skin

has not the horrible odour of the white people, an odour like the smell of a tiger, because like tigers they feed on flesh. And I know that your country, if not the same as mine, is the land of the Rising Sun. Surely, it must be there that the sun is born, and therefore my country, behind which it rises, must come before yours. Tell me how to reach it; if need be I will go there on my knees."

Mademoiselle Chair-de-Baiser shook her head.

"The sun does not rise in my country," she said. "He comes every morning out of the sea, or from behind the hills, following his course in Japan as in other lands. I have asked the white men who come here. They have told me incredible things, from which I gather that the earth is round. You are journeying then towards that which is not. The sun is not born each day, neither does he die; only men, beasts and plants die, but the sun and the earth are eternal. I believe all this, because the white men have told me, the white men who know everything."

"Chair-de-Baiser," said Tchao-Ouang weeping, "what you say is an impossible

miracle. And even should the earth be round, I have only to go all around it, and then reach China."

"You cannot," she replied, "because of the white man!"

"You are good," said Tchao-Ouang, "I am poor, and you have given me to eat. May the shades of your ancestors rejoice in your merit and live in eternal glory. Explain to me why the white men will keep me from seeing my country again."

"Because they will not take you thither. They will lead you whither they have need of you. Have you yet known a horse or an ox to die in the field in which he was born? The earth is wide, and only the white men can find their way about it. For men of other races, there is no road that leads back to the starting-point. And yet, how few white men have I seen return to this place! The earth is too wide for them, too, and it swallows them up. I long to see Japan again, and I am still here."

She fetched him a pipe, with a tiny bowl and a very thick bamboo stem, then lighted a little lamp and held in the flame a needle with something attached to its tip. With shining eyes, Tchao-Ouang demanded:

“Was it in Japan that you learnt to smoke opium?”

“No,” she replied, “at Saigon. A Frenchman it was who taught me to burn the black smoke. He is dead. And I am here.”

“Have you any money?” asked the Chinaman.

That night she did not tell him, for she feared him.

But later Tchao-Ouang explained his plans to her, for Tchao-Ouang remained in Zanzibar, and with Chair-de-Baiser he keeps an opium den much frequented by Europeans. He never fails to spy out any white men who appear to have a special liking for opium! And when their cheeks are hollow, and their hands clammy and shaking, he rejoices in his heart, for like himself those white men will never see their home again—because of the black smoke.

THE BLIND MAN

To M. Anatole France

THE man marched along stiffly, with his head slightly tilted back, leaning upon the arm of a private of the 75th Infantry.

Before them, closely covered with houses, the high hills of the Rhone and Saône stretched down to the valleys beneath. The church of Fourvières, towering above the sloping gardens with their steep ultra-new flights of steps, looked like one of those mock strongholds with which the English love to adorn the cliffs of their fashionable watering-places. Although it was the middle of winter, there was no sign of fog or mist ; the air was dry and cold, and the sun shone brilliantly in the clear atmosphere, making everything look bright and gay.

“Lyons is a fine place,” ventured the little soldier, for the sake of saying something.

"I don't know Lyons," returned the other man. "I come from Romans."

"And you can't see anything at all now? And you never came here *before*? You are quite blind?" Then that he might the more thoroughly realise the thing, after the fashion peculiar among peasants and uneducated folk, he evoked mental pictures. "You can't see the houses, nor the ships, nor the horses?" he went on. "You can't see where you are going?"

"No," replied the man shortly.

The soldier looked sad; a sadness mingled with a certain feeling of embarrassment and confusion, caused by the thought that here was an unfortunate fellow-creature whom he could not in any way help, whom no one could assist, and into whose misfortune he could not even fully enter, because of his inability to realise that misfortune. They walked along the quays for some considerable distance without uttering a word, when the silence was at length broken by the soldier.

"This," he said, pulling up abruptly with an air of relief, "is the Military Hospital."

The man stopped too. And the soldier at once addressed the porter; his com-

panion's long silence had evidently been too much for him.

"Look here," he said, "this man came alone by train with a paper signed by the major at Romans. When I say alone, the fellows who were with him got out at Vaise for some reason or other, I don't know what. When he heard the porters calling out 'Lyons,' he got down, but stood on the platform without moving. 'I've got a paper for the Military Hospital,' was all he would say. The adjutant who was on the platform read his paper and said, 'You're blind, I see. Well, I'll have you taken there,' and he ordered me to bring the man along."

"All right," said the porter, "you can go now."

In the meantime the man had remained mute and motionless on the spot where his guide had left him.

"Give me your paper and the major's letter," demanded the porter.

The man obediently drew the papers from his pocket.

"Hullo," said the porter, "you're called Dieutegard! That's a rum name!"

No answer.

“Are you dumb as well as blind?” went on the porter. “It wouldn’t damage your eyes if you were to speak, would it?”

However, he delivered the man over to an attendant who conducted him to the first story, and who was very gentle with him because of the great pity he felt—a pity shared surely by all—for one who was blind.

“Dieutegard, Class 78,” said the major, “I know all about him; the major at Romans has written to me. He’s an anarchist and is only shamming. Bring me the ophthalmoscope.”

The major was still young and with a face full of intelligence, the intelligence of a mountain-bred man, consisting of stern determination and continuity of purpose. He loved his profession, which still seemed to him as new and enthralling as it had been in the first days of his career.

“You used to belong to an anarchist society,” he said. “A few days before you were called for service you stayed away from your work at the Magnabos silk mills, your excuse being that you had become suddenly blind. One day you could see perfectly, and the next you were stone blind.

I must say that I consider the whole story highly improbable. There was no ophthalmoscope at Romans and so the major in command of the depôt sent you on here. You are an anarchist, you do not wish to serve your time, and you are shamming blindness. That is what we think. Now we shall see ! ”

He was speaking quietly and impersonally, but firmly. Of course the man had a right to lie if he wished and now he had to be convinced that he was lying ; that was Surgeon-Major Roger’s part of the business.

“ If you had shammed partial blindness,” he went on, “ or a weakness, a temporary weakness, that wouldn’t have been so absurd. But this ! What is your explanation ? ”

“ I was going along the road to St. Etienne with some of the men,” said Dictegard in a slow monotone. “ The sun was blazing down, and suddenly I felt giddy and as though I had been struck by lightning. I fell upon a heap of stones and cried out, ‘ I can’t see ! ’ ”

Roger let him go on speaking, pretending not to pay any attention to what he was saying, but to be entirely occupied with

the manipulation of the ophthalmoscope. Then he suddenly thrust his clenched fist with the thumb and first finger protruding, straight into the man's face, at a hair's breadth from the wide-open eyes. This is the old method of doing things, the oldest and best.

The man's eyes did not even flicker.

"The devil!" ejaculated the surgeon, "you're pretty smart! Close everything," he went on, turning to an attendant.

The latter shut the doors and shutters and drew the green curtains over the windows. The room became filled with a depressing artificial light.

They lighted the ophthalmoscope and the major turned the dazzling light full on the man's pupils. That reflected light is painfully intense, as anyone can testify who has only tried to gaze at the lesser light of locomotive or motor lamps. Dieutegard never even blinked.

"Well tried!" said Major Roger mockingly. "You've practised that a long time, haven't you? But no one can think of everything. Your pupils contract with the light!"

When a light suddenly strikes the eyes

of a man who has been for some moments in total darkness, the pupils contract, and he can no more keep them from contracting than a sensitive plant can prevent its leaves from curling up involuntarily when touched. It is Nature's dictum. That is why the major triumphed.

"There's nothing the matter with your eyes, nothing! Not the least sign of lesion. You are quite fit for service, my friend."

"It's not my fault if there are diseases that the doctors know nothing about," answered Dieutegard, with so much indifference that he might have been speaking for anyone but himself. "All I can say is that I cannot see!"

"And that's the same as telling me that you have no legs. We can *see* that you see. Dismiss!"

The first thing Private Dieutegard did after his enrolment was thirty days' cells for having simulated an infirmity which would have incapacitated him for service. For thirty days and thirty nights he lived in a cell six feet by twelve, in which there was nothing but a wooden bedstead fixed to the wall. There was a certain amount

of air, but no lights, nothing but a gloomy half-darkness. His meals were brought to him, but such meals ! Eating in the semi-darkness of a military cell is one of the most unbearable parts of the punishment, so I have been told—that is when the prisoner can see.

Dieutegard's appetite failed him ; but that was not sufficient proof of his shamming. The want of exercise was quite enough to account for his distaste of food. In order to give the prisoners exercise, it is customary to force them to do a certain amount of hard work. They cart stones and do other rough and tiring work. Dieutegard, however, persisted in his attitude ; he was blind, he said, therefore he could do no work. The non-commissioned officers and men who were in charge of him would march in a body straight upon him, but he never attempted to turn aside, and allowed them to hustle and tumble up against him. Some of them called him " Napoleon " on account of his pale and beardless face, the sight of which would make a lump come into their throats. Others named him " the Clown " because of the comedy he was supposed to be playing. Finally the two sobriquets were joined

together into one. The inertia of "Napoleon the-Clown" triumphed over the stubbornness with which he was opposed. They left him alone in his darkness. If he were blind it couldn't hurt him; and, if he were not, he was only getting what he deserved.

On the thirty-first day, however, the door of his cell opened, and two soldiers took him to Fort Lamotte.

With head thrown back and eyes set in a fixed stare, he crossed the long Faubourg de la Guillotière, accompanied by his two guards. It had been raining in the night and the pavements were still muddy; his feet went into all the puddles.

"If you would only look down and see where you are going, like everybody else, you wouldn't get so wet," said one of the soldiers.

"I tell you I'm blind," answered Dieute-gard.

"You try to appear blind, because if you looked on the ground you couldn't help stepping over the puddles. No, I'll swear you couldn't. A fellow's feet and eyes act together without his knowing it. Look down for a moment to see!"

"To see?" repeated the man sarcastically.

“ Yes, to see, you damned fraud ! And if you don’t do as I advise now, you’d better do it later on. It will be better for your health ! ”

The other soldier sniggered, for he knew what was in store. Dieutegard preserved a disdainful silence without troubling himself to act on their suggestion ; and they realised he was doing his best to send his thoughts far away. At last the long walk came to an end.

Fort Lamotte was formerly built to defend Lyons against the attack of a foreign army. Afterwards it was looked upon as a citadel. It towered above the Faubourg de la Guillotière, once so gay and full of life, now quiet and sleepy, and yet still peopled by the same strong, grave race of men. At the period of which I am speaking, the spacious enclosure was covered with barracks, which to-day accommodate a regiment of infantry and a battalion of *chasseurs à pied*. The bastions and ramparts *à la* Vauban are still in existence and they serve as barriers between the soldiers inside and the civilians outside who surround, and, so to speak, besiege it. The air is very pure there, and the place is encircled by deep trenches,



"IF YOU WOULD ONLY LOOK WHERE YOU ARE GOING."

which make it easier to keep discipline, and at the same time put temptation out of men's way. A man could climb a wall easily enough, but when it comes to ramparts thirty feet high! The soldiers have to be satisfied with dreams, and that is much healthier for them and for the world in general.

Dieutegard went through the gates without saluting the guard. His escort reproved him with the anxious timidity of privates who are afraid of being themselves punished, or at any rate reprimanded, for the faults committed by their comrades. The blind man apologised and saluted. When they had passed the quarters of the *chasseurs à pied* in the first courtyard the ground became very steep, and he naturally stumbled frequently.

When they reached the barracks of the 75th, Major Roger was awaiting them in the company of some other officers. There were several non-commissioned officers there also, smiling, attentive and deferential.

"At any rate he plays his part well," said one of them.

"You understand," said Major Roger, "that I protest against this experiment."

“Protest as much as you like,” put in a captain. “He isn’t your man now, he’s in my company, and you swore he could see. Therefore——”

“But supposing I made a mistake?” said Roger.

“It’s your look-out if you did. The man was sent to me as being able to see, to see so well that he was condemned to thirty days’ prison because he pretended he could not see. That’s good enough proof for me. Therefore I consider I have a perfect right to give my orders to Private Dieutegard. Is everything ready?” he continued, turning to one of the non-commissioned officers.

“Yes, *mon capitaine*. All that remains to be done is to take the man up the little staircase behind the canteen to the glacis, and to set him on the path. It isn’t ten yards long and it ends in the trench above the north-east casemate.”

“And—you have taken every precaution?” asked the major. “It’s a serious matter, you know.”

“Serious!” ejaculated the captain. “Do you think he will write to the papers?”

“No,” said the major, “or I’m much



YOU UNDERSTAND—I PROTEST AGAINST THIS EXPERIMENT

mistaken in him. He may be an anarchist but I'm sure he is not a sneak."

"Nor even a talker?"

"Nor even a talker. If he had liked—and let me tell you something too, I like the fellow."

Colonel Lecamus was present. He was a very stout man, who read a great deal. He was getting too stout to ride and would soon be forced to retire, and so his fellow-officers agreed that he was quite clever.

"A shammer? For if you allow him to try this experiment, you must believe him to be shamming. And you say you like him!"

Major Roger dared not answer. He even forced himself not to think, although from a medical point of view he was firmly persuaded that the man was lying. His reiterated "I cannot see!" seemed to laugh at science and all the statements, which, according to medical authority, should have been sufficient to confound Dieutegard.

The latter was waiting, immovable and indifferent, with his expressionless yet brilliant eyes that shone too brightly in the light. With his thin, white, sad face, his frowning brows and black hair, his haughty yet life-

less countenance, he looked both tragic and comical, a mixture of Bonaparte and Pierrot.

“Napoleon-the-Clown!” muttered Lecamus. “His comrades named him Napoleon-the-Clown, did they not? Well, they hit the nail on the head!” And he added in the same breath, “What a beautiful view one gets from here!”

Nothing makes a deeper impression upon the mind at a moment of great emotional stress than the sight of a beautiful landscape. A man remembers a certain May day because on that day he heard the voice of a woman singing in a garden. He has kept the memory of certain flowers, trees, and running waters—sometimes of smaller things, a tiny pebble perhaps, which remains fixed in his memory like a gravestone in a cemetery—but only because some unexpected incident quickening his sluggish soul rendered it susceptible to impression. Lecamus had hardly finished speaking when all the spectators grew pale. The sight of Dieutegard and the things surrounding him had opened their eyes.

They saw the little bare path, the worn grass of the glacis, the man in his coarse

canvas clothes and the two soldiers guarding him. Then, suddenly, on the other side of the ramparts, a low line of red brick, bordering a deep trench, met the eye. By lowering the gaze just a trifle, the mere doing of which forced tragically upon the on-lookers the dreadful significance of what they were contemplating, their eyes penetrated to the very bottom of the trench with its pool of dirty water, loose stones, and filth of all descriptions, sordid, hideous, and unclean.

Far beyond this came stretch upon stretch of green meadow ; red roofs shone in the sunlight and the little brown cottages in the market-gardens looked like so many toys. Then farther still towards the distant horizon, the slow, solemn, heavy white mists of the Rhone valley rose towards the sky. "What a beautiful view !" Lecamus had said. Ah yes, it was beautiful ! but the eye returned to the awful ditch with the rank grasses, the stones, the pool of yellow water and the filth.

"Dieutegard," said the captain, "march straight ahead !"

The soldier inclined his ear quite naturally towards the man who had just spoken to

him. The body followed the direction of the head and walked away from the ramparts.

“Straight ahead, *nom de Dieu!*”

And the stones, the pool of water, and the broken tins still shone at the bottom of the ditch with unbearable brightness.

“Straight ahead!”

With pale faces and awkward movements, the two soldiers guided Dieutegard again to the middle of the path. And this time he marched ahead!

His lips were open and slightly drawn up over his teeth. A momentary expression of distress came over his face, a fleeting expression upon a face which since so long had been dead and void of change. It seemed almost as though by some strange miracle a portrait were coming to life even as the painting wore away. And he marched along. Ten yards is not very far! twelve or fifteen steps at most, even the steps of a blind man.

One, two, three, four, and as he went along his face became white and expressionless again. Five, six, seven, eight, nine, he continued unhesitatingly towards nothingness. Ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen.

"Enough!" cried Lecamus, in a stifled voice. "This is madness! Stop him!"

Fourteen, fifteen. The fifteenth step brought Dieutegard to the brink of the abyss, and he disappeared, without a cry, amid a great and awful stillness. Every one came running up.

"The net was very strong," said the captain to Major Roger, "there is no danger."

But he ran as fast as the others. From props fixed to the casemate, the loopholes of which opened out in the walls of the ramparts themselves, a net, both wide and solid, was suspended—as the sergeant had said with a good deal of truth, the thing had been arranged as for a circus—and Dieutegard lay calm and unhurt upon the woven tissue of tiny ropes.

A few minutes later, the major and Dieutegard faced each other in the sergeant-major's office, and the surgeon, whose nervous system had received a shock, appeared to be much more upset than his patient. The latter was sitting in a chair with his two hands upon his knees, and his smile was very gentle.

Colonel Lecamus had pressed him to take something to drink, "a good glass of rum, or something like that!" The man had refused quite politely, but in the tone of an equal.

"Now listen," said the major, "you have been subjected to an extremely harsh experiment, and the very brutality of it must convince you that it will be the last. I let them have their way because I wanted to know the truth, because it is my duty, my business, my craze to know it. Now, I am going to communicate with the Reform Commission, demanding your release from the service. You will of course understand that your appearance before this Commission is a pure matter of form; they will unquestioningly accept the clauses of my report: '*Mise en congé, numéro 2,*'—that is to say, without any compensation—of Private Dieutegard, on account of an infirmity contracted before his entry into the service. Here is my report, prepared beforehand. See, I will sign it before you. Only, I have something to ask you. You have undergone so close a watch that, possibly, it has amounted to persecution. You have had to go through a terrible experience, I

admit. Well, now, will you—will you trust my word ? ”

Dieutegard thought for a moment, and then replied simply :

“ I trust you ! ”

“ I was sure you would,” said the major as simply. “ I therefore give you my word of honour that, whatever your reply may be, I will not alter a word of my report. In two days’ time you will be finally released. But I must know if science has been at fault, if the indications that convinced me you were shamming blindness deceived me. Will you answer me ? ”

“ I will answer you,” said the man.

“ Then I ask you if you are blind.”

Dieutegard rose from his chair. He was smiling and his smile was that of a conqueror. He stepped forward, and with extreme precision of gesture picked up from the table a blue-covered book, which the doctor recognised at a glance. It was the “*Théorie du Service intérieur des Troupes d’infanterie.*” He opened the book at the first page, and, in a calm voice read as follows :

“ As we know that discipline constitutes the chief force of armies, it is indis-

pensable that every officer obtain entire and unfailing obedience from his men; that all orders be executed to the letter, without hesitation or protest. The officer is responsible for the execution of the orders he gives, and complaint is only permissible on the part of the soldier after this has been complied with."

"Enough!" said Major Roger.

"In all circumstances and at all times," went on Dieutegard, "the soldier owes respect to his superior officers no matter to what branch of the service they belong."

The blind man, the *sham* blind man, whose pale face now shone with a kind of *quasi* insolence, would have gone on reading, but Major Roger interrupted him with so natural yet so proud an air that he stopped.

"It is not your superior officer questioning you now," said the major, "but a man like yourself, who has given his word never to remember what you choose to admit. You must not make the promise he has given unendurable, because, because—that is a coward's action."

Dieutegard's eyes became misty.

"I beg your pardon," he said in a changed voice, "I ought not to have given way to such a weakness, but I *cannot bear* to be called a coward. A little while ago, the net might have broken, and you ran the risk, or, at any rate, let the risk be run far less to satisfy your scientific curiosity than to get the whip hand of me. You may as well own up to it. However, you were *almost* sure that the net would not break. It's the same with me. If every one did the same as I have done, in France alone, and not in other countries, I know the country might be invaded. But the risk seems to me so unlikely that I have a perfect right to ignore it. And, after all, if I have escaped the slavery of military service, it is at the peril of my life."

"Ah," said Major Roger sarcastically, "that's a fine sort of courage! Supposing the event which you choose to ignore were really to take place, your companions would have to defend the life which you have so prudently economised, and the lives of fellows like yourself. And when we think that to-day France is the only country in the world where the laws and customs allow

everything to be said, everything to be thought and everything to be written! The only country where, without losing his job or dying of hunger, a man can deny God, not only in thick and learned volumes but in halfpenny papers! The only country where anyone looks upon it as his right to go about urging men to live without laws or authority of any description—without laws or authority, men who haven't an idea worth mentioning: what a farce it all is! The only country where all that a man risks, by abusing judges and chiefs, Jews and Christians, ancestors and posterity, foreigners and fellow-countrymen, the poor and the rich, those who dream of a future state wherein all will be equal and all happy, or tired tramps sleeping under the hedges, whose only desire is oblivion, is the chance of being decorated! Ah yes, France is a fine country, the only country for an anarchist. And you don't even care if such a country is destroyed! Where would you go if that were to happen?"

"Well then," said Dieutegard, "why do you want to defend it?"

"Why?" exclaimed Roger. "Well, for that very reason. So that France can finish

her work of disorganising all that yet remains in the world to be disorganised. And then because of the truths and possibilities of truths seething within her. Because we are the guardians of a still out of which, maybe, nothing will come, but which, on the other hand, may produce the philosopher's stone! And also because to my mind thought is less shallow in France than in any other country!"

"And what if my act were also to prove an ingredient for your still?" demanded Dieutegard.

Major Roger did not reply.

For one brief moment these two men felt an impulse to open out their hearts to one another, and confess to the deep doubt that an honest man always experiences on listening to the arguments of his opponent. But an identical thought stopped them from proceeding any further: what would be the good? When you belong to one side, you must stick to it whatever it is, otherwise you are nothing but a dilettante. And what is the good of that?

THE END

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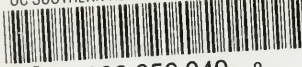
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